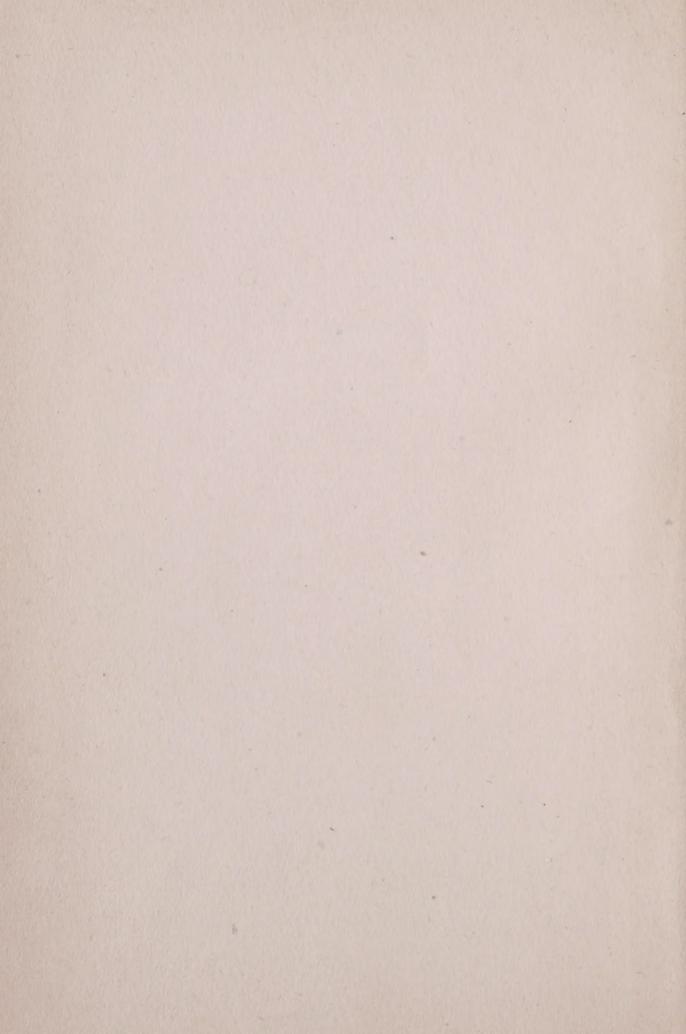


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LITTLE ARLETTE,

OR

My Cousin Guy.

Henri Ardel.

Translated from the French By FRANCIS T. FUREY, A. M.



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LITTLE ARLETTE.

CHAPTER I.

"You're sure, Guy, that you'll not forget my instructions? You won't forget that we expect a telegram from you telling us when to take the road for Douarnenez so as to reach there on the eve of the Pilgrimage," Madame Chausey once more repeated to her brother, a tall and handsome young man of about twenty-eight, of noble bearing, who was her junior by nearly fifteen years, and whom on that account she regarded in a way as she might regard her eldest son.

They were standing in the doorway of the principal hotel in Pont-Aven, awaiting the carriage that was to bring Guy de Pazanne to the little railway station of Quimperlé. He had taken to laughing heartily at his sister's instruc-

tions.

"I beg of you, Louise, to say nothing more to me on that subject. Your lack of confidence in my memory humiliates me. I assure you that I will carry out my mission of harbinger to perfection; that you will have 'cozy quarters and a downy bed,' as they say in poetry, a carriage for the Pilgrimage, etc. Depend on me for that!"

"May we really, uncle?" roguishly broke in a

blond young girl, looking slim and elegant in her white Parisian dress.

Beside her stood her betrothed; and to any one thus seeing them side by side it was quite evident that their marriage could not be classed as one merely "of convenience."

Like an echo came through the window the voice of another young girl repeating merrily:

"May we really, uncle?"

By way of pleasantry only did she give him this title, for ordinarily, fraternally, they addressed one another by their baptismal names only.

"You may, nieces, I give you my word of honor. Therefore enjoy in peace your closing

hours at Pont-Aven."

And, turning to the two lovers, he concluded

facetiously:

"Enjoy it, happy pair, to whom Pont-Aven will remain a synonym for a place of delight, so suggestive of the most delightful memories will it ever seem to you!"

"Come, Guy, do not make merry at their expense," remarked Madame Chausey, laughing; "otherwise take care lest when your own turn

comes. . . ."

"When my turn comes! I fancy it will be so late in life that by that time we shall all be too staid to be tempted in the least to joke or make

merry of one another!"

"'Sour grapes,' Guy," laughingly ejaculated Charlotte, the affianced girl. "If Jeanne d' Estève were here, would you still make such declarations, uncle, dear uncle?"

"Chi lo sa? Perhaps, indeed, the occasion, Pont-Aven's delightful verdure, the influence of the Breton sky, of all these Breton headdresses, of . . . what more do I know? Perhaps all these things together would work on me in such a way as to make me risk a decisive declaration to the beautiful Jeanne, but. . ."

"But," interrupted Madame Chausey, "for the present you ought to think, not of conquering the lady of your thoughts, but rather of bidding us adieu and taking your departure; otherwise you will miss your train, and you know

that. . . ."

"That I have to look up for you at Douarnenez a domicile, a carriage, etc. I assure you, Louise, that you do not have to repeat it to me again. I am off. . . . See, here comes my vehicle."

And that vehicle was far from elegant—a sort of small covered cart, hobbling and jolting, driven by a pale thin-visaged Breton, the ribbons of whose broad-brimmed felt hat were waving in the breeze. Far from elegant, indeed; and Guy surveyed it with an amused glance, whilst through his mind passed a fugitive vision of the nettlesome team that, in Paris, he had been wont to drive daily to the Bois.

Madame Chausey repeated:

"Hurry, Guy, unless you want to miss the train; your equipage is good enough to take you there. Stroll a good deal around Douarnenez until we arrive. If time weighs too heavily on you in our absence, go and make the acquaintance of that family of relatives of ours down there."

"Oh! yes, the family that you have discovered

for us at Douarnenez!"

"Discovered! Nothing of the sort! Come, Guy, jog your memory. Only yesterday I explained to you that the local doctor, Yves Morgane, is a distant cousin of ours, by his first wife."

"A cousin after the Breton fashion!"

"No, indeed; a genuine cousin, after the fashion of every country. Guy, do not be ever jesting

so. You are intolerable!"

"Whether a genuine cousin or not is of little importance to me," he said, smiling listlessly. "I have no desire to go and make the acquaintance of that estimable Douarnenist. Moreover, as he is now in the power of a new wife, he is no longer any relative of mine, any more than the houseful of children with which, you say, this new wife has blessed him. You may go and visit him, if you see fit, Louise, most amiable and most sociable sister; but as for me, I will leave that Æsculapius, an excellent man I am sure, to his patients."

"It ought to be time to start, sir," timidly interposed the driver, who was caressing his small

horses' ears with the tip of his whip.

Guy looked at his watch:

"The deuce! No doubt of it; the time is growing short. Start! So long, Louise and nieces. In two days, then, I will expect you."

He cordially grasped the hand of Charlotte's lover, Pierre Rivesaltes, a childhood comrade of

his, and mounted the vehicle.

Some young misses of the English colony-

quite strong at Pont-Aven—were most unceremoniously watching the young man's departure, whispering to one another in their English tattle, which gave to their words a chirping sonorousness, and exchanging remarks about the brilliant Parisian ladies, all three so light-hearted and so young-looking that one might easily take Madame Chausey to be her daughters' eldest sister.

They had also made quite an impression on the artists, ever numerous in that delightful little corner of Finistère.

"Somebodies!" they had murmured to one another the first time that, escorted by the two young men, these ladies had entered the curious dining-room of the "grand" hotel of the place.

And with a connoisseur eye they had discreetly examined the three tourists—the mother, in the full-bloom of fine womanly maturity that had given her a superb bust, while at the same time leaving her countenance surprisingly fresh under the caress of bright auburn hair most carefully put up and artfully mantling over blue eyes that were almost continually smiling as were her lips, which naturally exposed two ivory rows of teeth that remained irreproachable.

In her eldest daughter she seemed to live again such as she had been twenty years before; it was the same blond beauty, the same joyous and unchanging heartiness that was diluted in her second daughter, a delicately pretty brunette, after the model of a Saxony statuette, which she equaled in elegance; but a discreet elegance,

impregnated with a grace that was as marked as was her very nature, quite gentle, naturally calm and correct, instinctively hostile to any originality whatever, though that originality

remained ever so far from eccentricity.

Those who classed Madame Chausey among the privileged ones of this world were not in error. In character she was an utter stranger to every feeling of pessimism; and the loss of a husband, for whom she felt more esteem than affection, had been the only trial to cast a shadow on her life as a woman. Her daughters had never caused her any serious anxiety, to such an extent had they inherited her happy disposition. Charming as they were, they were wonderfully successful in the world, a fact of which their mother was quite conscious. And to crown all, she was about to have one of them married, just as she had wished, to a man whom she had long known as a friend of that brother for whom she felt a genuine maternal tenderness, of which her daughters, Charlotte and Madeleine, laughingly said they were jealous.

Quite attractive, it is true, was that Guy de Pazanne, who illustrated the rare occurrence of being appreciated equally by men and by women; by the former because he was a most gallant man, as devoted a friend as he was a safe comrade; by the latter because to them he was chivalrously courteous, with a chivalry discreetly marked with a touch of boldness that gave a special savor to the homages he offered to them while softening the ever-bantering brilliance of his look, which was made for the study of men

and of things. As a soldier and in time of war, he would have been one of those who perform acts of heroic and mad temerity as if he were taking part in play. But he was not a soldier, in no wise had he to display military courage, and he performed no other acts than those dictated to him by his own sweet will. Yet, under his smiling skepticism he concealed a most real and most warm kindness of heart, a power of devotedness that one would not have suspected in that elegant clubman to whom life had ever been good and fortune kind. Without his having had the trouble of acquiring it, the latter indeed furnished him with an income that he spent with a light heart, as well in Paris, from which he could not long absent himself, as everywhere else, in France and abroad, whither he was attracted by his curiosity as a man of very superior intelligence and endowed with most correct artistic taste.

And it was because bounteous nature had so dowered him that he had just found so keen a pleasure in his trip into Brittany; for this reason, too, the prospect of taking part in the Kergoat Pilgrimage on Lady Day in Harvest was agreeable to him; and from the train which carried him toward Douarnenez, he kept unweariedly looking out on the flying landscape, his eyes distracted at the stations by the sight of the costumes characteristic of the country, the white headdresses with raised wings, waving around the countenance of young girl and old woman alike; distracted by everything that revealed the existence, in that extreme end of

Brittany, of a little world apart, picturesque as the land in which it lived; still shut out from the manners, the customs, the very language which was that of all other beings born in the old land of France.

But, after a brief stay at Quimper, the train had just made its final stop with a sharp whistling, and on the bright blue board that overhung the station platform, in large white letters, was printed the word: DOUARNENEZ.

CHAPTER II.

It was now evening—a sultry August night on which was borne by the breeze an exquisite perfume of honeysuckle and dampened verdure such as follows warm rain that makes the earth odorous and the sky limpid in a gushing of stars.

In his hotel room Guy de Pazanne was writing by the light of a lamp, and his correspondence must have been amusing him, for a faint smile

lit up his countenance. He wrote:

"Where, think you, have I just come from at this evening hour, late according to Douarnenez custom? Whence, think you, have I just come, as I have only at this moment reached the rather respectable hotel in which you will soon have to set up your household gods, O sister, nieces and future nephew? If, instead of a mere letter, I had to write, under very heavy penalty, a chapter of learned reflections tinged with philosophy, I would call it—and how correctly you will acknowledge ere long—'Of the Influence of Storms on Men's Actions, and on My Own in Particular.'

"Yes, dear Louise, had the sky not been leaden, loaded down with clouds this afternoon; had not those clouds burst over my head and the heads of the people of Douarnenez in heavy downpours accompanied with lightning flashes and thunder peals—and this is no metaphor; had

not my curiosity as a tourist at that moment drawn me far away from any shelter; had not great, mighty, mysterious Chance deemed it opportune to be concerned with my insignificant person, I had not entered whither I have gone, nay, where I have been to dinner, to my great distraction.

"Charlotte, my darling, I imagine I hear you call to me impatiently: 'Where, then, have you been?' Be calm, niece. You shall have a complete, detailed narrative, such as might be a romance by. . . But so as to hurt no one's feelings, let us not mention the name. shall have a narrative, the details of which will reveal to you that evening pleasures are conspicuous at Douarnenez by total absence, and that blessed are those mortals who know how to suffice unto themselves. This is a truth of all time which I prize highly at this moment.
"And my story? Well, here it is, O most in-

quisitive of nieces.

"You have already guessed it, have you not? This story has a heroine, a heroine who must be a unique little creature of her kind, even though she be not my heroine. Child or young girl, just merely a little girl, perhaps; I am not so very certain which of these names suits her best. She is all of them combined, and, according to details, she is either. In all frankness,—for we are now very good friends, and that without there having been any boldness in her conduct or audacity in mine, you may rest assured, wise Madeleine,—in all frankness, then, she confided to me that she is just seventeen. But she is so slender, yet not frail, that from her figure alone one would rank her among the very young.

"And now, where did I meet her? Here are

the circumstances:

"Tableau No. 1.—I have just alighted from my coach in the Douarnenez terminus. I ascertain that the atmosphere of the country is burning hot, perhaps an unusual condition here, and that the sky is a quite threatening greyish blue. As well as I can I protect my valise against the excessive zeal of representatives of all the hotels, both small and large, and I make my way to the majestic bridge that at a considerable height stretches over the Pouldavid. In front of me briskly walk a group made up of two chunky little boys-not handsome, on my word, as thus seen in bewildering profile, but robustly broadshouldered—escorting between them a spare and dainty young girl in a rose-colored dress, whose countenance I do not get a chance to scrutinize. I am only able to survey the pliant outline of a cheek velvety as a pretty fruit, an adorable white nape showing a golden reflex from the flap of deep auburn hair with coppery red streaks, most perplexingly wreathed, in such a way as to leave entirely free, but yet just grazed by small undisciplined and frizzled locks, a young girl's neck proudly supporting a fine head whose outlines I do not see. But every very little while I hear the outbursts of a young voice and a hearty laugh fit to cheer the most gloomy misanthrope in the world. Charlotte, do not judge my excellent friend and your lover, Pierre, too severely; he will understand me when I tell you that, impelled by a vague curiosity, I hasten my steps forward so as to get ahead of the group as they continue to scamper before me, ever so smartly. At last I pass them; but the said group, which certainly mean no malice by that, turn around at this very moment as a single person; and just then I notice that my unknown one has laughing lips and large black eyes, very black, somewhat sunken under her brows, whose big pupils sparkle gleefully with all the vivacity of youth.

"As a man of sober sense I go on my way without further indulging in the sin of curiosity, and I reach the hotel reputed to be the most pleas-

ant in the town.

"Tableau No. 2.—And just as I make my way into it I find its atmosphere thoroughly impregnated with cheerfulness, for its landlord's first heir has just been christened to the accompaniment of a copious discharge of small shot and of ringing of bells. The father is exultant and invites me to celebrate the birth of his newborn son along with those who are already guests of the house, to whom he is offering a rejoicing punch. The male servants are radiant also, and so in like manner are the chambermaids, under the flapping of their headdresses, seeming as if palpitating, all of them rejoicing likewise as it were.

"You can easily understand that I felt somewhat out of my element in the midst of that general hilarity. I positively felt as if I were an intruder in this house, in which the most conscientious efforts could not give me the desired tone. Accordingly I set out to explore the little

town and its nearest surroundings, like an imprudent man who forgets that from the beginning storms have at their own good time let their floodgates loose on mortals exposed to their effects. Far from being deterred by the heavy grey clouds tinged with red that were constantly piling up; during the yet fugitive lightning flashes and the first rumblings of thunder, I stopped oh, how imprudent!--to admire more leisurely the superb horizon formed by the tempest-laden sky. Nay more, I stopped on a highway, known as that of the Ris, just where there branches off from it an excuse for a path which descends almost perpendicularly to the entangling windings between the rocks that hedge the coast, and which leads down from a great height, picturesque as one could wish in its borderings of furze and heather, but appropriately abrupt. A goat path I may call it.

"And yet, just as I was thus thinking of it, strollers emerging as it were from the rocks entered upon it. They were one . . . two . . . three. And one of these strollers was a strollerss, in a rose-colored dress, who recalled to my thoughts the already effaced vision of my unknown young girl of the Pouldavid. Was it she again? By way of answer the strong rising wind carried to me the far-off echo of words spoken by a young voice, and I could make out these simple expressions:

"'Quick! Corentin. . . . The storm is close. . . . Which of us two will be the first on the road?"

"That, and nothing more, is what I heard.

And I had distinctly heard, for all at once I saw a small rose-colored form spring forward and run, so rapidly that she seemed merely to brush the dusty grass on which, alas! large drops of rain were already splattering. She clambered up unceasingly, giving me, I assure you on my word, an exalted idea of her agility and of the perfect soundness of her lungs. She clambered up as easily as we get along on our well-graveled acacia walk. She clambered like a light rosy whirtwind, not seeming to have the least idea how in-

credibly rough the path was.

"At some distance behind her, for example, the small boy whom she had called Corentin was trotting clumsily, stumbling from one side to the other, his cheeks flushed, his too stout urchin limbs unable to compete successfully with his companion's young fairy feet. For a second, however, she stopped to turn round, and far behind her she perceived the unfortunate Corentin continuing in his toil to advance quickly; then, still farther down, her other companion taking it upon himself as a duty to catch up with her. He was making long strides, jumping over clumps of furze, spurred on to the play, no doubt, by noticing that genuine little elf almost at the top of the path. She had already started off again, after having gladsomely called to the boy: 'You can't catch me!' and she reached the top with her nose in the wind, her half-disheveled hair flying around her face in the squalls, which had become furious; one of them even carried off her hat without her seeming to notice it; and in triumph, charmingly exhibarated by the excitement

of the race, she appeared on the highway just in front of me. Her cheeks were purple and her skin quite moist under her shivering little white locks on nape and forehead; a rapid breathing just opened her lips, fresh enough to make one dream of foolish things, and in her large black pupils danced a flame of pleasure the reflection from which enlivened the brilliance of her countenance, which was piquantly, chittishly and delightfully irregular.

"She had no suspicion of my presence until then. Suddenly finding herself only a very few paces from me, she uttered a faint 'oh!' of surprise that she immediately suppressed; for at that very instant a blinding flash rent the clouds massed over our heads, and was followed immediately by a deafening thunderclap. She jumped from fright and, replacing her comb haphazard

in her thick undulating hair, she called:

"'Corentin, Yves, let us fly! Quick! We are

going to get wet!'

"They were indeed—and so was I! through my fault, through my grievous fault, in punishment for my curiosity. And seriously wet. About that there was no longer the shadow of a doubt; for the clouds were opening to let down a veritable waterspout on our heads. The boys in their turn emerged upon the road, good Corentin, unembittered by his defeat, carrying the hat left behind by its owner, who seemed not at all concerned about it. But the shower beating on her hair must have made her fully conscious that she was bareheaded, for she at once replaced her hat with no slight pleasure, while with like

rapidity I opened the umbrella that I had brought with me, thanks to my scent as a civilized animal. I was almost ashamed of it on seeing my young Atalanta bedewed after the manner of the flowers which she equaled in brilliance. How good-naturedly she bore the assault of that formidable shower-bath filled me with admiration of her valor and with contempt for the care

that I was taking of my own self.

"Between ourselves, I felt positively grotesque, strutting with a brisk and dignified step, under the shelter of my umbrella, and I a man! whilst those three children were getting wet to the very marrow of their bones. To offer the entire use of my umbrella was quite heroic, for it was raining—and oh, how heavily! on that shelterless road, fringed only with tall fir-trees, insufficient under the circumstances. To offer to share it was not without its charm, my old Pierre. But did I know how I would be received? My courtesy, discretion and selfishness were waging fierce battle, whilst in front of me my unknown heroine was running between her two bodyguards. I saw the water gradually marbling the rose-colored bodice. Then it occurred to me that there are moments when propriety ought to keep in the background, when there is question of the laws of mere humanity, and, with the aid of a few rather long strides, I caught up with the group and called: "'Miss!'

[&]quot;She turned round. I saw the large eyes compounded of shade and light fix on me in great astonishment, with a child's look.

"'Miss, the rain is coming down so heavily that I entreat you to do me the honor of accepting the shelter of my umbrella.'

"Her expression of surprise became still more pronounced. At the same time she shrugged her

shoulders in token of indifference:

"'Thank you, sir. It is all the same to me to

get wet!'

"I had already so suspected for some time. But I had not even an opportunity to answer her, for a peal of thunder resounded so deafeningly that all four of us trembled. Corentin, who was not valor personified, drew close to his sister, and I indistinctly heard big Yves' voice articulate:

"'Arlette, you had better accept the gentleman's offer, for father will be annoyed to know that you have been caught in the storm!'

"Arlette! What do you think of that old

name given to this very young creature?

"Probably Mademoiselle Arlette's father was a power to her—even though she had a mouth quite indicative of self-will, for at the mere mention of the name she was so docile as to come and take her place by my side. And, much better still, we took to running along the road, from which we could, at last! look down upon the good town of Douarnenez, drowning under that new deluge.

"Alongside of me Mademoiselle Arlette was flying silently, her bright look wandering to right and to left, without ever for an instant resting on my mean person, but rather, from time to time, on some sprigs of honeysuckle that she had slipped under her belt, the perfume from which came to me in whiffs. I saw her only in profile; a wild lock of hair, quite golden, fell in a ringlet over her left temple, waving in the wind, and every moment she threw it back impatiently.

"The two boys were galloping along with

great strides.

"During our disorderly journey I asked my companion:

"'Please tell me, miss, whither I am to escort

you.'

""We are almost there. There it is! Let us make haste; in a second we shall be under shelter!"

"To make haste must have been familiar to her, for marvelously did she do so. I followed her closely, I who had not her young girl's nimbleness. The boys rushed into the walk of a garden enclosed by a railing. Mademoiselle Arlette leaped forward, and I followed her example, striving to protect her as best I could against the hail, which was now lashing us. With a bound she cleared the dripping steps of a small stone stairway, and reached the threshold of a narrow and lofty door. There I discreetly stopped. But her voice resounded almost imperatively:

"'Come in, sir, come in quickly!'

"And I obeyed, impelled first by the instinct that urges us to seek shelter when it is raining, and then by curiosity to know who this young sylph was. Then I found myself in the presence of a stout bourleden with cheeks like biffin apples who, in the Breton tongue, was fulminating with an air of authority against big Yves and unfortunate Corentin, pointing out to them with angry gesture the marks of their muddy boots on the vestibule flags. On seeing me she stopped short, seeming as if wishing to ask who that bold person was who took the liberty thus to penetrate, quite wet as he was, into a strange house; and so full of meaning was her expression that I felt a desire to excuse myself to her bluntly and then wend my way toward Douarnenez.

"But Mademoiselle Arlette repeated to me:

"'Come in, sir.'

"And, no longer hesitating, I went in. She was moving to open a door beside her—a sanctuary that I must have been unworthy to become acquainted with, for the fierce matron gave a sign of indignation and in Breton uttered some words in that furious tone that seemed familiar to her; but yet Mademoiselle Arlette appeared to take very little concern of it. Merely a purple wave mounted to her rosy cheeks, the wilful curl of her lips became intensified, and, posing her little head, she said, while keeping her hand on the door knob:

"'I wish it so, I do! Is papa there?

"'No,' in French this time, growled that terrible bourleden. 'No, the doctor has not returned.'

"The doctor! I set my ears. I was in a doctor's house! And at Douarnenez! Louise, the Turks are eminently wise—one does not escape his destiny, and the voice of blood is not

what a vain people thinks. I questioned as respectfully as possible:

"'Please excuse me, miss, for asking you this question: Am I not in Dr. Morgane's house?'

"'Just so!' Mademoiselle Arlette replied, look-

ing at me with large inquiring eyes.

"'And is this not Mademoiselle Arlette Morgane who is so kind as now to offer me hospital-

ity?'

"'Yes!' she again replied, in the same tone of extreme surprise. I feel certain that at that moment my little apparition of the Pouldavid was beginning to think that the storm had upset my brain. 'Yes, I am Arlette Morgane.'

"And, unceremoniously she unaffectedly con-

cluded:

"" Why do you ask me that?"

"'To have the honor, miss, of presenting my-

self to you as your cousin, Guy de Pazanne.'

"'My cousin! You are my cousin? What cousin? Not from Chateaulin, for then you would be my stepmother's cousin, but not mine. Oh, no, not mine!'

"Why the deuce did she speak to me of Chateaulin? A mystery! At all events, I an-

swered:

"'No, not from Chateaulin, from Paris. I am a transient only at Douarnenez, and my sister, Madame Chausey, and her daughters will reach here the day after to-morrow. Do you know her, at least by name?'

"I was positively making myself feel like an intruder, like one of those imaginary cousins who turn up in a comedy; and a strong desire to

laugh took hold of my throat as I noticed the stout bourleden's wild look, as well as the surprise of Yves and Corentin, my cousins also, but who in no respect resembled their sweet little sister. I know not what thoughts were at work in her young girlish brain; but the gods be praised for that! She seemed to have already accepted without reserve, as I offered him to her, that unknown relative found on a highway during a storm, when there appeared on the vestibule threshold a large outline figure, that of the doctor himself. In the confusion of that impromptu introduction we had not heard him approach. Before I had time to articulate another word Mademoiselle Arlette had bounded toward him, had caressingly thrown her arms around his neck, and exclaimed:

"'Oh! papa, guess what an odd thing has happened! This gentleman gave me the shelter of his umbrella; his name is Monsieur de Pa-

zanne, and he is our cousin!'

"'Monsieur who? What sort of a story is

this?' remarked the doctor, dumbfounded.

"I advanced, beginning over again a serious presentation to the doctor, going over all the particulars, fearing lest that man, of highly intellectual mien, of sad and weary countenance surmounted by almost white hair, would take me for a sort of adventurer desiring to introduce himself into his home. In Paris, probably, I would have aroused this far from flattering fear; but at Douarnenez one is more confiding and more hospitable. The doctor had no doubt of my identity, remembered you, Louise, myself

when I was a little younger than big Yves, reached out his hand to me and, finally, opened for me, not the sanctuary door, but that of his office, a large room the desk in which was loaded with papers and books. The two boys had disappeared; Mademoiselle Arlette, alone, had entered after us and was soon huddled up close to her father, like a wheedling kitten; but he at once perceived that her hair and dress were damp and, though she remarked that 'it made no difference to her to be wet,' he soon hurried her off to get dry—and in what a tone of tender solicitude!

"The two of us remained in the large room darkened by the storm, and the doctor, as if it had been the greatest pleasure to him, took to talking to me of the past, of the time when you, Louise, were so intimate with his young wife, whom he seems to have adored, as he now adores the only child that she bore to him, his Arlette. The others, the two boys and his second daughter, now at Chateaulin with Madame Morgane, he loves, I have no doubt, but in other fashion; Arlette must be the only real joy of his life. One clearly sees this from the way in which he follows her with his eyes. She alone seems to have the power of lighting up the sombre expression of his features.

"In his second marriage he does not appear to have found perfect happiness; every now and again a word in his conversation betrays in him a frightful intensity of despair, skepticism and bitterness. He leaves the impression of a man who had once inflicted on him an incurable

wound, the secret of which he keeps to himself, but which is gradually, slowly and surely undermining him. His pale and hollowed countenance alone appeared to me as a revealer; and a word from him confirmed my opinion.

"As he had just recalled the days when you and he often met, he suddenly said to me with a

sad smile:

"'Your sister would not recognize me. Life has made of me an old man before my time. Since the beginning of my life as a man I have been suffering from a blow, the effects of which

I have never been able to get rid of.'
"From his tone I surmised that he was alluding to the death of his young wife. He remained silent for a moment, his look lost in some internal vision. And as for me, I thought of what you had related to us, some days before, of Doctor Morgane's marriage to your second cousin, Reine de Pazanne. No means on either side, was it not? but a love marriage, which made two happy for scarcely a few years. thought also of this second union of the doctor's on which he had decided, you say, so that little Arlette would not feel lonely whilst her father was absorbed in his patients. No love marriage that; I can swear to it without having seen the second Madame Morgane. True, I have heard her spoken of.

"The doctor suddenly resumed:

"'You never knew Arlette's mother? You were a child when she got married!'

"' Mademoiselle Arlette resembles her?'

"'Not in features, perhaps. But, taken all in

all, she is to me the living image of her mother. You can judge for yourself. With you present, it seems to me, God knows, that the past comes back again for an instant. This resurrection is terribly sad to me, and yet it brings me also an

unexpected joy for which I thank you!'

"From a locked drawer of his secretary he took a portfolio, opened it and held it out toward me, without letting go of it, without turning his eyes away from it; and I saw, on a miniature, an adorable brown head, sparkling eyes, a child's mouth like Arlette's, round shoulders emerging from a cloud of white draperies. . . .

"The doctor said to me in a halting tone:

"'The year of our marriage! Her head was covered so, thus was she dressed in white, the first time I saw her. It is the picture of her that

I love most to see again!'

"He kept looking at it with a sort of avidity, his countenance still more hollowed, a painful contraction around his lips, not even, I am certain, hearing the words of profound sympathy that came to me for him. Silence again came between us, so absolute that I most distinctly heard the sound made by the drops of rain trickling from the branches under the cleared sky. Then all of a sudden Arlette's fresh voice arose, to end in an outburst of laughter. The doctor gave a start. Without a word he shut the portfolio again. And he said to me, with his very same smile of undefinable bitterness:

"'To you I must seem very weak, do I not? Strange that I should so allow myself to be dom-

inated by reminders . . . of the olden time, seeing that I have made a new life for myself. But, the nearer one approaches his end, the more one loves to turn back toward the time, the fine time, of youth! And, from one minute to another, my end may come. I have a disease of the heart with which I shall not live many years longer. I as a physician can nurse no illusion of myself.'

"He stopped for a second; then, changing his

tone, he concluded:

"'It has made me very happy to see you, and so will I be to see your sister once more. If you are disengaged for this evening, will you give us the pleasure of spending it with us? Come to dinner. I regret that Madame Morgane is at Chateaulin, with her family, for a few days more, as neither Arlette nor myself knows very much about receptions; but you will no doubt excuse the simplicity of ours.'

"I was going to reply. I had no time to do so.
"The office door had opened before a slender little person who, having heard the invitation, exclaimed in a tone in which entreaty and com-

mand were mingled in the oddest manner:

"'Oh! yes, sir, stay, it will be so amusing!'
"Since it would be 'so amusing' if I came, I would be quite naturally a marfeast if I declined Monsieur Morgane's invitation, so warmly seconded as it was by my cousin Arlette. I merely returned to the hotel to leave off my tourist suit maltreated by a storm. Then, as Mademoiselle Arlette had gone to the trouble of recommending to me, I did not lose very much time in preparing to retrace my steps to that house.

"When I arrived, she was pacing up and down the garden with the air of a sovereign in her kingdom, and, after having received me with the most charming of smiles, she said to me in a tone full of insinuation:

"'Do you mind if we remain in the garden?

One feels so comfortable here!'

"'I am entirely at your orders, miss,' I began.

"She stopped me.

"'Do not say "miss" solemnly like that, since you are not any mere Mr., but a relative.'

"'I will say "cousin," then! Is that better?'

"'Yes, that sounds better, and when you know more of me you will simply say "Arlette," will

you not? That will suit quite well.'

"With this understanding, there began between my young companion and myself, in that garden scenting of mignonette, a conversation that was most fanciful, most piquant, most amusing,—to your humble servant,—taking it for granted that Mademoiselle Arlette Morgane, reared far from the world, has not the least idea that one can ever disguise one's thought. Accordingly she expresses her feelings, opinions and impressions with a spontaneity and candor that are savorously droll, without her being concerned for a second with the judgment that heaven and earth might pass upon them.

"Thanks to this imperturbable frankness, now I know wonderfully well what is the state of her heart, a sort of sanctuary into which one does not enter at will. The deuce! she admits into it only very few of the elect! The omnipotent god of the sanctuary is her father, whom only, exclu-

sively, she adores, with all the treasures of tenderness that she seems to possess in abundance. Very far behind, but still in the temple, are the two boys, Corentin and Yves. At the very door is Madame Morgane's big daughter; behind the door, it seems to me quite plain that she has pitilessly relegated Madame Morgane herself, who, through Arlette's unaffected reflections, appears to me like a sort of domestic tyrant governing her subjects under inflexible rules; I judged her so, and still more so when I saw her portrait in the room of the house that is her sacred domain, the parlor! And what a parlor!

"The most stupid room in the house!' Arlette

at once explained to me.

"'Indeed? How severe you are on this poor room!'

"'Not at all! You are going to see! The pieces of furniture are correctly arranged there close to one another. They have an air of disagreeable elderly persons, ugly and motionless as well, who are tired of themselves. Papa is like me: he detests the parlor, and enters it only when he cannot do otherwise. As for me, when I go there to practise on my piano, I shut my eyes while crossing it. You understand that as the chairs and armchairs there have been, are and will be forever in the same place, I run no risk of coming in contact with them on my way!'

"I asked out of curiosity:
"You are a musician?"

"'That is to say, I sing what I like. But in my own way. And this way would perhaps seem to you very bad, for I have never taken a lesson.' "More and more puzzled, I asked:

"'Then, will I not have the pleasure of hearing you?'
"'What? Sing? Oh! this evening as much

as you wish.'

"I had to remain satisfied with this answer and to cut my thanks short, for in front of me Arlette was opening the door of the famous parlor. Ah! she had not described Madame Morgane's favorite room too unfavorably. Lined alongside of one another with geometrical preciseness, there was a file of armchairs and chairs, not to forget a vast couch, all alike covered with the most blinding of green repp, sprinkled with red poppy-hued peonies; on the mantelpiece were porcelain vases decorated with roses of incandescent purple, and in these vases, Louise, were paper flowers! Oh! certainly not, my cousin Arlette had not passed an unfavorable judgment on her stepmother's parlor. She looked at me mischievously, a smile drawing back her lip.

"'I was right, was I not? Say so! It gives me so much pleasure when one is of my opinion! You do not find this room very attractive?

"'No, not exactly,' I acknowledged, while my eyes, which were wandering far from delighted around the said parlor, found on their way two portraits encased in frames worthy of the whole collection of furniture.

"Arlette, whose keen eye had followed mine,

remarked to me in an expressive tone:

"'Madame Morgane and her daughter, my sister Blanche. Would you like to see their photographs?'

"And before I had answered she had crossed the parlor like a whirlwind and, returning with the two portraits, she stopped in front of the large open window, through which there came to us the same fresh odor of mignonette. Then, at the first glance cast on Madame Morgane, I un-· derstood why between her and her dainty stepdaughter the affinities must be quite the contrary of excessive. The features of the countenance were rather regular, heavily traced, but a severe line marked the contour of the lips, as well as that of the eyebrows, which extended under a narrow forehead—a stubborn forehead—and hair planted low, smoothed in well-stretched tresses that were also quite correct. To sum up: a vulgar whole and the countenance of an imperious woman thoroughly imbued with her own impor-Her daughter, on her part, while very closely resembling her, boasted of a round and placid face, of two small eyes that might mean anything, and of a bust so majestic that it really required all of Arlette's reiterated assurances to persuade me that she was only fourteen, and not eighteen or twenty, as her-robustness might have easily led me to believe.

"'That is because she is very tall and very stout!' Arlette explained. 'As for me, I look like a poor fly alongside of her! Accordingly she finds me quite an abortion! Are your nieces

tall also?'

"'Oh, yes, rather!'

"'And they are pretty all the same?'

"Nieces, out of regard for your modesty, I do not report my answer. But from it Arlette drew this conclusion, which escaped from her lips with a deep sigh of envy:

"'How delightful it must be to be pretty!'

- "On my word, she was so charming with that expression of unaffected desire in her eyes and on her lips, that an exclamation escaped from me:
- "'But, cousin, you must be marvelously well aware of that pleasure!'

"She posed her head:

"" Why do you say that to me?"

"'Because I think it.'

"'You think what? That I. . . .'

"She stopped, with a purple flush on her cheeks.

"'That Dame Nature has been very generous in your regard! Yes, certainly, I think so; and

I imagine that everybody thinks as I do.'

"'I do not know. No one has ever said the like. And Madame Morgane, even, is ever repeating the contrary! Then, you are speaking honestly?'

"'Honestly, rest assured!'

"'You are not speaking merely from politeness, so as to please me?'

"'Not the least in the world. I am telling

you only the real truth!'

"Her countenance was lit up with a childish pleasure, and she whirled about with the light-

ness of a fairy:

"'Oh! What happiness, what happiness! So Madame Morgane will no longer be able to make me believe that small women are only monsters, since you, who dwell in Pairs, find me pretty;

and you ought to know something about it! How happy I am, then, that you have come!'

"All that was said with juvenile joy and without a shadow of vanity. But I know not what further revelations in regard to Madame Morgane our conversation would have brought to me had not the doctor come in and invited us to dinner.

"Arlette had been severe on her stepmother's dishes and plates, which she had announced to me as frightful. Beyond dispute, they were ugly, but somewhat less so than the parlor furniture. The table setting was conspicuous for its total absence of elegance; yet an admirable bunch of honeysuckle was in bloom on the middle of the table, in a crystal bowl, by reason of Mademoiselle Arlette's thoughtfulness; and, moreover, she seemed delighted with this embellishment, and took it in, on the slightest occasion, with a glance of satisfaction that was quite amusing. But this did not prevent her from chatting with her playful liveliness, for she seemed insatiable of details concerning all of you, sister and nieces—details to which she listened while devouring her dinner with her pretty cat's teeth, milk-white and fine, while beside her the boys gulped theirs in silence.

"But though they were mute as statues, yet they seemed filled with admiration of their young sister's liveliness; and they impressed me as being intensely devoted to her. Doctor Morgane himself was overcome by the influence of her youthful laughter, for his countenance was somewhat lit up, and he revealed himself as a very interesting talker, informed of everything bearing on the progress of current science, as well as of that of contemporary art—so much so, indeed, that I am still asking myself why a man of his merit has seen fit to bury his whole life in

a small fishing village.

"Between him and Arlette I had everything needful for a delightful evening's chat, and on widely differing topics; but, without my suspecting it, my young cousin was reserving an exquisite surprise for me. And this surprise she produced after dinner, whilst we were in the garden enjoying an incomparable evening. All of a sudden, while listening to her talk, I was struck with the richness of her tone of voice; and at once came back to my memory her promise to give me a little music. I reminded her of this. She recalled it with very good grace; but as I arose to follow her again into the house, she stopped me:

"If you are comfortable here, stay; from where you are I can be heard quite distinctly. Just there papa remains every evening while I

sing for him.'

"I accepted, so delightful was it to follow the advice. I repeat to you that the night was worthy of Charlotte and her intended husband, Pierre.

"In the dim light that came through the window Arlette's slender form was outlined.

"'Cousin, what do you wish to hear? A sad

piece, or a lively one?'

"Both sad and lively! Anything you wish, for I am passionately fond of music in all its forms, provided they are beautiful!"

"'And for my part I adore it!' Arlette called

to me as she disappeared.

"Louise, you will hear this young girl sing, and then you will have to admit that there is not the least exaggeration in what I say when I declare that she is marvelously gifted. What she sings and the way in which she sings it are unlike anything that we have been accustomed to hear; it is old Breton songs, ballads, roundelays, some plaintive, others of a rollicking strain or even wildly passionate. She enunciates them as she feels them,—and she feels very keenly,—giving them a tone, a setting, an intensity of expression that are perfectly astonishing. She sings them in her own way, as she says, for she has never taken the shadow of a lesson, in a voice altogether fresh and grave, which bounteous nature gave her full, flexible and marvelously thrilling. She sings them with quite simple accompaniments, nearly all of which she has herself improvised, according to the character of the poesy for which they were intended. For certain ballads she has found chords of organ sonorousness.

"Ah! indeed, I understand why her father remains for some time, and then lingers longer, of an evening, to listen to her. When she stopped, an instinctive 'Encore!' arose to my lips. But she did not hear me. Returning to

the window, she called to me pleasantly:

"'How silent! Cousin, have I put you to sleep?'

"'Asleep? Say rather you have so charmed me that I find it difficult to return to earth and that I can call up no words to thank you.'

"Do not thank me. Singing is the greatest pleasure to me. I am happy only in not having wearied you by obliging you to listen to me so

long.'

"Had she, then, been singing long? Just at that moment a clock—that of the church, no doubt—struck ten. It must have been a late hour in Douarnenez, for I then noticed, having returned from the world of enchantment into which Arlette's music had carried me, that big Corentin was asleep, with his nose in his cravat, and that the tall Yves was strongly tempted to imitate him.

"With all haste did I arise and begin to take leave of the doctor, who seemed alive to the pleasure that Arlette had given me; but to my enthusiastic words he merely answered:

"'Why should she not be a musician! Her mother was so to such an extent as you cannot

imagine!'

"As regards the young person herself, she did not seem to have the least suspicion in the world of the amount of talent with which Heaven has gifted her. Hanging on her father's arm, in that fawning way which is peculiar to her, she accompanied me as far as the garden gate; the flame from the lamp bathed her pale countenance, her fiery look and her little girl's mouth in capricious reflexes. Through the night, as I let the gate close behind me, I heard her fresh voice calling to me for the last time: 'Good evening, Guy. Until to-morrow.'

"And it was thus, on a memorable day, that I made the acquaintance of my Cousin Arlette."

CHAPTER III.

On the market square of Douarnenez there was a small low shop, well known not only to the housewives of the locality, but also to artists and men of letters coming to make their summer sojourn there, for they took pleasure in paying frequent visits for the purpose of chatting with the owner of the said shop, Mademoiselle Catherine Malouzec. It was so because she had indeed her own personality, had that solid Breton damsel, betraying so little trace of her threescore years that her tall robust form showed no effect of it, even from a distance; scarcely did a few wrinkles furrow her white wax-like countenance, from which shone very bright eyes that lit up indisputable ugliness, but an ugliness that was smiling and amiable. Ever dressed in the same manner, she had the air of a nun, her grey hair stretched in flat bands under her frilled bonnet, her unique dress, always black, falling in stiff folds along her large ungraceful body.

In the oldish little shop, glazed with narrow panes, behind which were arranged, in season, alternate pots of geraniums and fuchsias, not only did she sell everything,—clews of woolen yarn next to images variegated with bright colors, Quimper crockery ware, chocolate and feather dusters for the use of the housewives of Douarnenez,—but she also, with singular and innate

dignity, received the choice visitors who came to her in search of details regarding the customs, legends and ballads of the country. These details she gave to them in original language becoming an intelligent woman, with a turn of wit quite peculiar to herself, as she had never been

subjected to any intellectual influence.

Not rich nor yet poor, she came of a very honorable family and could have lived "as a lady" in her house. But, above all, she was a strict observer of tradition; and her grandmother and mother having in succession been sovereign mistresses of the low little shop, she had quite naturally followed their example except in so far as remaining a maiden, for she pitilessly regarded herself as too ugly to be successful in the

conjugal venture.

Her brother, no less respectful of the family usages, which had made the men mariners from father to son, had long been devoted to the sea, trading a little on every coast, until the day too long in dawning—when, at last weary of his wandering life, he returned to settle down on that spot where he had played as a boy, with vigorous little brats who were now oldish men like himself. He had found the paternal house such as he had seen it when quite young; he had resumed possession of the room which he had occupied as a lad, that very one in which he had entertained his first dreams of a life of adventure, and the very walls of which in places still bore the marks of the tattooings that he had inflicted on them in representation of the scenes described in his cherished books of travel.

But now Monsieur Malouzec read no more, his recollections henceforward furnishing him a book that sufficed to delight him; and his favorite occupation had become the care of his garden, to which he paid a veritable worship, in company with a pretty human flower, his favorite, Arlette Morgane, who did whatever she wished with him, as Madame Morgane disagreeably remarked on all occasions. Indeed this old sea wolf of athletic build, after all the most peaceable, best and mildest man that one could wish to meet, was the docile servant of the fantastic Arlette Morgane. "She is the only passion of his life!" laughingly asserted Mademoiselle Catherine, who showed no jealousy whatever thereat. She herself adored the child, whom she had known since birth, with all the unused tenderness that her old maid's heart contained. And the child knew it well.

When she was a baby, the low shop on the market square made on her the impression of a somewhat mysterious world, so many things did she notice there, of the use of which she understood scarcely anything. And so she came there all at once fearful and delighted, without, however, losing any of her comic assurance, her haughty little mouth, which had not kisses for everybody, reaching out to seek caressingly the long thin face of Mademoiselle Catherine, ever lit up with a kindly smile for her. And then and there she was sovereign mistress, which suited admirably her juvenile independence; she was received as a queen by Mademoiselle Catherine, who was delighted at seeing her parade her

diminutive person in the dark shop, and amused at the boldness of the little fingers foraging right and left, even into the depths of the bushel baskets filled with dried lentils, for the mere pleasure of afterward scattering the innocent lentils to the four winds of heaven with a brisk movement of her hand.

Sometimes, however, if Arlette's fancies became too bold, Mademoiselle Catherine lost patience and mildly reprimanded the little queen, who scarcely took any notice of it, but at once desisted from her play. With those whom she loved she was docile, yielding her impetuosity to the yoke in response to the tenderness shown her; moreover, she was easily provoked at others exercising authority. Whence her more or less declared rebellions against Madame Morgane, who was incapable of understanding a ready-witted, ardent nature like that of this child, and who was irritated at not being able to transform her into an ordinary, docile, calm, industrious little girl, a sort of living machine quite easy to put in motion.

Industrious Arlette certainly was, but in her own way, passionately fond of what interested her, but totally indifferent to everything else; for her mind was as it were a personage of very independent mood dwelling in a very precious palace that was still quite new, with crystal walls that were luminous and iridescent, and hermetically sealed against intruders. In the first rank of this number the owner of the brilliant palace unhesitatingly placed arithmetic, a very estimable science no doubt, but after the

manner of a sorcerer's conjuring book; good, she declared, for merchants and old folks who have put by large savings, but not indeed for little

girls in the dawn of life.

By way of retaliation, the doors had been opened quite wide to two illustrious sisters, history and geography; but she had received them in her own way, questioning them only on what delighted her, diverting her reverence from what was chronology, dates, administration, and with perfect ease eschewing the lists of rivers, mountains, and other geographical accidents, which she left where they were, to remain there until the end of the world. Yet she was captivated by the visions which certain of them, sometimes by their mere name, called up in her imagination, which had already been prepared by the captain's stories to enjoy the picturesque of distant coun-He had navigated down there, in charming regions that Arlette would never know, where grew strange tall flowers, under skies of an unfathomable blue, in the shade of splendid trees, such as were to be found in those stories and legends that she so loved to read.

For, like all young beings, she had a taste for the marvelous. She adored the histories of saints performing miracles, which excited her to transports of admiration and never seemed surprising to her unaffected and ardent faith. She had filled her memory with old songs, old Celtic ballads that made her live in a charming world, unknown to the profane, peopled with enchanters, saints, fairies, and heroes escaping from here and there. Legend and history, indeed, had become so mingled in that young brain, which was indifferent to the order of time, that it would have been quite impossible to make her distinguish the domain peculiar to each. To Arlette all the personages that pleased her were contemporary. It was thus that she made live on the best of neighborship the valiant Arthur, Henry IV., Roland the paladin and Mary Stuart; nay even the beautiful and fatal Dahut, King Gralon's accursed daughter, to whose history, while still quite young, she listened with charmed affright, and went soon afterward at low tide to try and see, in the infinite blond of the sands, the still striking ruins of the city of Ys, as was told. As regards the heroes who had not the gift of attracting her, she cast them aside pellmell into the very dark chaos whither never would venture the hobgoblin that was her favorite sprite; and at the head of the victims relegated into this gloomy abyss was enthroned the unfortunate Louis XIV. That majestic great king, helmeted in a cumbrous wig, to Arlette seemed quite crudely stupid for having buried his countenance under such an edifice and his liberty under the thousand bonds of etiquette.

It was because liberty seemed to her the greatest of blessings, to her, genuine goblin as she was, a sister to those whom simple folk thought they saw in the evening dancing with all their might on the moor; like them, all aflame, smitten with motion, overflowing with laughing mischief, with intensely tender heart, with thought so clear as if intended to become merciless when her extreme candor no longer kept it in check;

having within her a whole world of sentiments, ideas and impressions that were united with one another and succeeded one another in such a way as to make of her a singularly living little creature.

A little creature who held, then, a very large place in the present life of good Captain Malouzec, who on the quiet regarded her somewhat indeed as his child, for that very reason that he had seen her a chubby baby and that she had ever been his favorite, from the time when he took so much pleasure in guiding her first faltering steps.

And, indeed, if on that day Monsieur Malouzec no longer enjoyed the radiant peace of that Sunday morning, it was because to no purpose did he await this little friend's visit. He had scarcely caught a glimpse of her since that Chausey family had suddenly come upon the scene, claiming the right to make ample acquaintance with her and

monopolizing her completely.

It was a providential meeting at which there was reason to rejoice, Mademoiselle Catherine declared. In that manner the child would become acquainted with her mother's relatives.

Yes, it was all right, the captain acknowledged; but, when all by himself, he thought with secret pleasure, while at the same time regarding himself as very selfish, that that brilliant family of Arlette's was going to make only a very brief stay at Douarnenez.

And so he repeated to himself over again, whilst, seated in the shade of a well-foliaged hazel, he was contemplating the verdant perspec-

tives of his garden. In the walks around him the sun was strewing intense light, spotted here and there by the harsh shadow of some branch around which insects were buzzing as if intoxicated with light; and in the infinite blue of that summer sky swallows were wheeling around in wild curves, in broad wing-sweeps that seemed to carry them toward the palpitating sea.

The warm breeze that was stirring loaded with an indefinable odor of ripe strawberries and of lilies, suddenly brought to the captain the noise of a distant sound of bells in the church out of

sight, and he thought:

"Ere long Catherine, returning from High Mass, will bring me news of Arlette, since the

child is abandoning me!"

This accusation was a rash judgment; for all of a sudden the captain received proof of this, as at that moment appeared on the threshold of the house a slender person running down the stone steps and in like manner crossing the garden in-undated with sunshine.

"Good-day, captain," she exclaimed, mirthfully.
"What! is it you? you indeed, little queen? I thought you had entirely forgotten me, that you were going to set out for the Pilgrimage without doing the charity of a flying visit to your old friend!"

And he imprisoned Arlette's whole hand in his

two big ones.

"If you have thought such a thing, captain, you are an ingrate! Only I am quite sure you did not think so, for that would be too bad! In a little while we will set out for Kergoat. But

I scampered off to come and find you. It was too long, indeed, since I had seen you! And so, see how warm I am from having hurried so in

running hither!"

She raised toward him her young face which a wave of blood was empurpling more deeply on the cheeks. Toward the roots of her wild hair, foaming around her temples, the skin was quite moist. At this Monsieur Malouzec felt uneasy.

"My little child, you must not on my account put yourself in such a state! I could very well have waited one day more, until you had fully recovered your liberty. To-morrow, is it not, the

Chausey family depart from here?"

"I do not know for certain! Oh! captain, I would like to see them remain here forever! It is so charming to have them! And especially while Madame Morgane is absent!"

"How quickly you get smitten, Arlette!" he remarked, touched with a vague feeling of jeal-

ousy.

"But, captain, they are so amiable to me! even Charlotte's intended husband! An officer, you know, and quite well-to-do! He is in great glee to marry Charlotte!"

"I really think so! At a distance, marriage is

always an amusing story!"

"At a distance? And at close view?"

"At close view . . . at close view. . . . That is according to tastes!" stammered the captain, feeling that he had ventured on delicate ground.

And so, to turn the course of Arlette's reflec-

tions, he asked:

"And your aunt? You say nothing of her!"

"My aunt? She is excellent. And I already

love her very much!"

"Well, that takes in all! You adore the whole family, including the intended husband and your handsome cousin."

"I do not adore them, I love them! It is so good to love! But of them all, it is still Guy, I think, that I prefer. Captain, he is all right!"

"All right? My little child, how enthusiastic

you are, then, for nothing!"

Arlette bounded out of the rocking armchair in which she had been briskly balancing herself.

"For nothing! If you saw Guy, I assure you that he would make the same impression on you as he has made on me! He is delightful! He would be perfect if . . ."

"If what?"

She resumed her place in the armchair, on the way snatching a strawberry into which she sank her fine little teeth.

"If I were sure that he is not poking fun at

me!"

"He is poking fun at you! But he must, then, be a very poorly bred man. How can he please

you?"

"I am not quite certain that he is poking fun at me. Only he has eyes that examine me as a curiosity. Is there anything extraordinary about me? Look at me closely, as if you did not know me."

Conscientiously did the captain look. She had stood erect in front of him, quite straight in her slender little form, of proportions so harmonious that one would not dream of remarking how small they were. The blood flowed under the transparent skin, empurpling the lips, and the eyes sparkled with a velvet black, questioning, wide open, the old man as he pursued his examination.

"Well, captain, is there anything extraordi-

nary about me?"

"Nothing at all, my child. But perhaps the Paris girls are different from you! It is perhaps on that account that he bestows so much atten-

tion on you."

"Yes, perhaps it is on that account!" she remarked, pensively. "But yet I hope that his indiscreet eyes have not seen in my thought that. . . . "That?"

"That I find him quite to my idea! Oh! captain, I understand that people declare young folks charming, when they are so lively, so pleasant, so amiable, when they kiss their hand to you on arriving and leaving, when they have seen other towns than Douarnenez, when they know lots of things that you do not know! For I am sure that my Cousin Guy knows many things that I do not know!"

"Naturally, my little girl, naturally; he has

studied much more than you."

"But, captain, I do not refer to what he has learned from books! I speak of what one learns from . . . from life, of all that I cannot guess at."

"Fortunately, for they are things that do not concern you, Arlette."

"But it is precisely for that reason that I am so desirous of knowing them! Through Guy's eyes, while he is listening to me babbling, all sorts of ideas are passing, as I can clearly see. And so there are moments when I have a wild desire to call out to him: 'Of what are you thinking?' And then I dare not. . ."

"Fortunately, my little girl, for he would find

you very indiscreet!"

The captain's smiling countenance became more embrowned than ever under the influence of the shower of praises which fell on that Guy, and, with a somewhat discomfited mien, he asked:

"But, then, how does your Cousin Guy look?"

"Neither too stout nor too spare, and very tall! taller than you! and much more so than I! When I speak to him I must raise my nose very high to see whether he is listening to me!"

"Arlette, I thought you detested tall per-

sons!"

"Women, yes; but not men! It is even very amusing to find oneself quite small beside them and to see that, nevertheless, they submit to everything you wish!"

The captain was nervously crushing a small

clod of earth.

"And your lady cousins? Are you also filled with admiration for them?"

Unaffectedly she said:

"Think you that they make me very much afraid! They are so well bred, elegant, graceful, amiable, perfect, in a word, I feel myself a sort of savage compared with them! I ask my-

self why Guy, accustomed to seeing them, can

find me pretty!"

"How do you know that this gentleman finds you pretty?" remarked Monsieur Malouzec, knitting his heavy white eyebrows.

Triumphantly she replied: "Because he told me so!"

"What! he told you? Then your cousin is an insolent fellow!"

"Why?" she asked, dazed; "why?"

"Because it is not the custom . . . because one ought not to pay compliments to well-bred young ladies. Moreover, my child, young men say that to all the women they meet. It is tomfoolery to which no attention ought to be paid!"

- "Tomfoolery? Then, captain, you find me an abortion just as Madame Morgane ever pretends that I am? Oh! no, do not tell me that! I am so happy in thinking that I can be pretty even though small and a brunette, even though I have disordered hair! In Paris people have not the same tastes as at Douarnenez! So much the better!"
- "Arlette, my dear child, do you know that you are abominably coquettish!"

"Is it coquetry to be satisfied when one finds

you right?"

"Oh, yes!" dogmatically asserted the captain.

"Then, so much the worse! I am a coquette, for I am delighted at not being ugly as I thought! Captain, do not scold me; you would be quite as happy as I if, since your childhood, you had heard yourself treated as an insignificant person, worth nothing at all, good only for do-

ing stupid things and for being scolded afterward! You would find it delightful to learn that you are nothing of all of that, and you would say with me: 'Long live coquetry!'"

And Arlette, prettier than ever, balanced her-

self triumphantly in her vast armchair.

But at that very moment there arose in the

garden a woman's voice, loud and ringing:

"For goodness' sake! What do I hear? Yves, are you listening to your daughter? She will scandalize Monsieur de Pazanne."

Jumping up, Arlette turned around. A few steps away Mademoiselle Catherine was approaching, wearing her prettiest headdress, carrying her prayer-book under her arm, and accompanied not only by Doctor Morgane, but by Guy himself.

"What, cousin, you here?" she remarked, in

amazement,—but not sorry.

"Yes, myself in person! Monsieur Morgane stopped me on the way, and Mademoiselle Malouzec was so amiable as to authorize me to come in search of you along with your father."

"In search of me?",

"Just so. We come to carry you off to breakfast with us before setting out for the Pilgrimage."

"Father, you will come also to Kergoat?"

she asked, already gleeful.

"No, dear, I cannot. I will meet you again this evening. It is your aunt who has asked this for you."

He laid his hand on the young brown head. But Arlette, quickly breaking away, tenderly drew that hand under her lips. Then she took to chatting with Guy; and the captain smothered a sigh of resignation.

He hardly suspected that this terrible Parisian would, a few moments later, conquer him in his

turn, by admiring his flowers.

The miracle was performed nevertheless; and when, a quarter of an hour after, Guy de Pazanne left the garden in which grew splendid lilies and strawberries, the good captain no longer considered as an enemy that handsome young man who had suddenly sprung out of Paris to fill a little girl's brain. And so he could find no answer to make when, the time having come for leaving, his friend Arlette whispered to him in a meaning tone:

"Is it not so, captain, that you also find my

Cousin Guy all right?"

CHAPTER IV.

SEATED between her two lady cousins, Arlette was carried along on the Kergoat road in a break that rolled well, having been chosen by

Guy, a connoisseur if there ever was one.

"It is for you, Arlette, to show us your Brittany," pleasantly remarked Madame Chausey, who had been conquered from the first meeting by the radiant youth of this little girl whose mother she had really loved much and whom she felt herself quite ready to love also, so much the more as she was altogether very sensible and essentially good. With a smile on her lips did she listen to her chatting, archly narrating the minor incidents of her daily life, thus giving up to all questions the secret of her young thought, with that unaffected and original frankness which Guy found so savory and which he relished with the pleasure of an over-sated man meeting on his way some unwonted treat. Without seeming to do so, he yet managed to contradict her a little, to call in question the orthodoxy of the legends which she related, to be astonished at her deep sympathy for seamen, "her seamen," as she called them; all that discreetly, but enough for him to have the enjoyment of seeing her rise in rebellion and ardently defend her opinions. of a sudden, moreover, at a word from him that made her thought deviate, she interrupted his pleadings to question him in his turn, regarding Paris especially, the name of which seemed to awaken in her mind the vision of some splendid city like to a dream city. As Guy guessed, she would not have been more surprised at seeing in it, in the guise of houses, palaces surrounded by fairy gardens, decorated with fountains of gushing water, with iridescent reflexes, walks shaded with those trees which she loved so much, in which moved men and women who were all rich, all happy, all finding life an exquisite feast, worthy of being deemed such.

"I am sure," he said, laughing, "you suppose that in Paris there is never either rain, or mud,

or other annoyances of that sort?"

"There are? I had never thought of that!" she remarked in a tone mimicking that of a child before whose eyes one would darken a picture that had been luminous.

"Yes, there are. As there are everywhere detestable men and women, crying children, smok-

ing chimneys."

"My goodness, Guy, what an enumeration!" interrupted Madame Chausey, who was as much amused at her brother's affected seriousness as at Arlette's mien. "Do not rob this child of her illusions."

"The fact is that illusions are not among the objects that it is possible to find again once they have been lost. Cousin, be very prudent and very wise, then, in carefully keeping yours. After all, I would be a veritable ingrate were I to speak ill of Paris! It is a delightful city, as

delightful as you imagine it, and it surpasses your Brittany by I know not how many ells!"

"Oh! not so!" she rejoined, indignantly. "Your Paris may be beautiful, but not more so than my Brittany! Look at it here, even, and dare to tell me the contrary! Look at the sea, my friend the sea! For it is truly my friend. Both of us understand each other so well! Like a person, it understands me. I speak to it of all that I love, I tell it what I desire, what I am expecting, what I hope for and what I wish. And it answers me in the song of its waves, always as I wish that it should answer me. Ah! the sea, I adore it!"

Madeleine looked at Arlette, somewhat surprised. This little creature, enthusiastic and vibrating, not cast in the customary mould of young girls, disconcerted her a little; and she smiled at hearing her answer in the same tone of conviction a word from Guy:

"This evening you will see what my friend the sea is in the setting sun! You will see. .

"Well, we shall all see," interposed Madame Chausey. "But, for the moment, is it not time to go see the Pilgrimage? Guy, tell the driver to hurry up. If we delay so, we shall get there when everything is over!"

No mishap was to be feared, Arlette asserted, and she had wide experience on this point. Moreover, Kergoat was not far off. A few villages more left behind, then, indistinctly at first, but becoming more distinct with the passing of every moment, there appeared the verdant mass of the tiny wood that enveloped the chapel of Kergoat. Already stood out more clearly its foliaged peaks, its branches casting patches of shadow on the crowd that encumbered not only the road, not only the wood, but even the little cemetery quite close to the chapel, where the tombs were hidden under the tall

grass.

For the pilgrims were numerous, of every age, of both sexes, of every costume, filling the covert of trees with a gladsome murmur in which were fraternally mingled—the hour for the procession not having yet arrived—the guttural sonorousness of Breton words, the exclamations of the drinkers at table in front of the only tavern, the stamping of the horses and asses tied here and there, close to road wagons, the appeals of venders selling playthings for the little ones, bonbons and candles for all.

In the cemetery, as in the walks bathed in sunshine, there was a variegated crowd; the men all wearing broad-brimmed felt hats; those of Douarnenez clad in a pale blue vest hemmed with black velvet, grey trousers striped in squares of subdued pattern; those of Pont-l'Abbé wearing short vests of black cloth, embroidered in gold color; those of Plougastel having on the back of their vests a large picture of the "Blessed Sacrament."

There were pilgrims there who, coming from very remote villages, had walked all night so as to be able to attend Mass in the morning; and wearied, now that the desire to arrive no longer sustained them, they had sat down wherever they could find a place, on the grass-tufted mounds of

the wood, on the porch steps. Even on the tombs, made of long flat stones, mothers were suckling their infants, while around them larger children, funny looking in their skirts that fell to their feet, quite puffed in consequence of a very tight waist, were devouring beautiful carmine apples, their round faces blooming under the straw and linen caps that covered their hair. Young girls, with their faces nimbused by their headdress, were laughing sweetly with the boys who stood around them; and through the groups were wandering infirm beggars, monstrously ugly, who were loudly displaying their wretchedness under the trickling of the light that fell from

that clear August sky.

Led by Arlette, who knew her people and skilfully slipped her spare person into the crowd, Madame Chausey and her daughters, in spite of the presence of so very many tourists as had already arrived, succeeded in finding places on a sort of slope that overlooked the very entrance to the chapel. Thanks to the seats that the young folks had procured for them, they were awaiting without the slightest fatigue the moment when the bell announcing the procession would be rung, amused by the picturesqueness of the scene that was delighting them. Guy was the very first to be alive to it, and, with a ready crayon, he was sketching, as they passed, those curious shadows, considering the Pilgrimage from a point of view that somewhat astonished Arlette; for to her, a Breton in her soul, the Pilgrimage was indeed a religious feast.

"Why do you look at me so?" he remarked,

his curiosity roused by the expression of the childish eyes fixed on him.

"Because you seem as if preparing to witness

a play!" she acknowledged, spontaneously.

"And is it not a show that is awaiting us, or rather that we are awaiting?"

"Not at all, but a procession."

A slight flame had darted from her pupils. And Guy, the skeptical and curious Parisian, suddenly had the exquisite intuition, considering his over-sated taste, of what a truly young soul was, ardent in its faith.

"I have scandalized you," he said, "I earnestly beg your pardon for it. It did not occur to me that you will henceforward have a detestable opinion of me!"

"Oh! no. Only I think that you are not very

pious!"

He began to laugh heartily, while Madame

Chausey replied:

"You are quite right, Arlette, to think so; Guy is a great miscreant. He would do well to think of his salvation, for unless he does he runs great risk of meeting a very sad fate in the next world!"

Arlette, somewhat confused, looked now at Guy and now at her aunt, but at Guy especially, astonished that one could be so little affected in the presence of a prospect like that pointed out by Madame Chausey; and, incapable of containing her thought, she asked:

"You are not frightened, cousin, at the idea

that you may be broiled forever?"

"But I sincerely hope that I will not quite merit a fate that seems to frighten you!"

"That frightens me! It fills me with a terrible fear when I think of it, in the evening, before going to sleep, especially on days when there have been storms with Madame Morgane. Fortunately, during the day I regain confidence!"

"Well, then," replied Guy, with affected grav-

ity, "you are not a good Christian."

"I!" she remarked, astonished and vaguely

uneasy.

"Look here, Guy, do not tease her," Madame Chausey interposed. "She cannot know that you are joking!"

"You were joking? Oh! so much the bet-

ter!"

She did not continue. A ringing of bells was suddenly wafted through the air, which it animated with deep vibrations. An eddy was at once produced in the crowd of pilgrims kneeling on the cemetery grass since the ceremonies had begun. The chapel door had just been opened, giving a glimpse, in the shadow of its depths, of a sparkling of lights, of candles that, borne by the faithful whom one could not distinguish, seemed like wandering stars shedding flashes on the altar gildings.

"You are going to see," said Arlette to Guy, who was standing beside her; "the boys are about to bring out the banners. As the door is rather low and as those banners are very tall and heavy, the boys will take a spring and come out running, so as to set them upright with a single effort. If they succeed without having to try again, that wins them a very good mark for later

on, when they want to get married!"

"Indeed? Well, then, let us look."

The whole multitude also were looking, beginning with Charlotte and Pierre, who had taken the precaution to get instantaneous views of the whole scene with his kodak; and the many little Breton girls were also watching, contemplating that scene with attentive eyes, curiosity lighting up the naturally grave expression of their countenances. One, two, three banners appeared in succession under the cramped vault of the porch. The boys, tall, well-built youths, had to exert themselves to set them up slowly. Two had to try again several times, with wavering movements that made the reddened gilt fringes palpitate in space. But a third, with a single effort, raised in the air the heavy staff from which floated, on a background of red-tinted velvet, the gorgeous picture of St. Anne, superbly attired in a dress interwoven with gold.

A murmur of approbation ran through the crowd. Then a meditative silence pervaded the pilgrims. The procession began; and already there started in line the section of the young girls, dressed in heavy white muslin, with blue belts, and bonnets sparkling with spangles such as bourledens wear, holding in one hand their hymn-books, in the other one of the azured, rosehued, bright yellow gauze oriflammes, undulating in the sun, like gigantic butterflies with outspread

wings.

They passed along slowly, their eyes bent on the ground or fixed on their half-open books. Behind them came the boys of Douarnenez, of Pontl'-Abbé, of Chateaulin, of Plougastel, forming a

guard of honor to the banners floating high above; and their countenances had the serious expression of believing and honest-minded beings. Following them there advanced old men who had preserved the bragou bras costume, old men of Chouan mien, their heads uncovered, their white hair flowing long over their wrinkled necks. Between their fingers those in front were devoutly telling their beads, while at the same time carrying candles the flame of which seemed quite pale in the intense brightness of the sun. But those bringing up the rear, preceding the clergy, whose white surplices were already to be seen, timed their slow march to the sound of clarinet and tamborine; and the shrill notes were lost in the sonorous chant of the bells ringing incessantly. At last there appeared, raised on a sort of throne, the miraculous Virgin who, as she passed, made the Breton heads bow—much more than those of the curious strangers.

Arlette piously knelt; her lady cousins bent their heads. Guy continued to look on as an artist and in dilettante fashion, insatiable, taking in every detail of costume of the girls carrying the statue. With their high headdress besprinkled with spangles, their brown and emotionless faces, their bodices trimmed with embroidery, they had the appearance of Indian idols, even while defiling solemnly, in the rustling of their silk aprons with large odd-looking flowers that almost entirely enveloped their white robes with pendant belt, covered with silver ara-

besques.

With heavy and measured tread they were

now moving away. Behind them the multitude of pilgrims defiled, candle and rosary in hand, even the smallest of them, entangled in their long skirts; and the unrolling of the procession was continued under the trees, enclosing in a human circle the old chapel, whose vaults had heard so many prayers.

"Is the procession not going to return?"

Charlotte asked.

"Yes, it will pass once more in front of us; and then it will be ended."

It will be ended! A sort of unconscious regret was palpitating in these words of Arlette. What, then, was it that was going to end? Was it only the Pilgrimage? Was it the procession that was coming nearer now, preserving the same grave and slow gait? Was it not especially that afternoon the memory of which she confusedly felt that she would ever keep, as of those enchanting dreams which she sometimes had and the details of which remained graven in her young girl's brain?

"Of what are you thinking, Arlette?" Guy asked, astonished at the pensive expression which suddenly transformed that childish countenance

into that of a woman.

"I am thinking it is very sad that the hours are passing so quickly, so quickly! I would like so much that this afternoon would last a long time yet!"

With curiosity he asked:

"You are so much in love with the Pilgrimage?"

"It is not the Pilgrimage that I regret so

much to see ended; it is your visit. To-morrow you will leave."

"Yes, to-morrow. But we will find each other

again, I sincerely hope."

"You will return to Douarnenez?" she re-

marked doubtingly.

"Perhaps so . . . to see you! But it would be better were you to come and make the acquaintance of our Paris, of which we will do you the honors as you have done to us those of your Brittany! Moreover, if for nothing else than politeness, you ought to return our visit!"

"Ah! if I could! I assure you that I would

not have to be begged to go!"

He smiled at hearing her speak so ardently; and, as Madame Chausey called them, he made her get up into the break that was to bring them back by way of Locronan, the dead little town which of old had been an important city. Now it had nothing more in its favor than the picturesqueness of its old church, in which was piously honored the bishop St. Ronan, and of its few loftly stone houses, most of them half crumbling under the rank verdure. They visited it as indefatigable tourists. Then, as the hour was advancing, it was necessary to set out again; and once more the carriage rolled along the road that skirted the coast between tufted hedges scenting of honeysuckle. They also scented the sea, now quite close, by the keener breath of the breeze, by the more slender shadow of the trees, bent toward the ground by the eternal winds from the deep. And all of a sudden, in front of them, after a last bend in the road, the bay was unfolded in its radiant extent, hemmed in toward the north by the heights of the Menez-Hom and extending to rejoin the infinite of the ocean under the purple clearness of the setting sun, which betorched the distance. Softly caressed by these fiery gleams, the waves were undulating, rocking, iridescent with changing tints falling from the limpid sky, where a pioneer star was already shining.

Arlette uttered an exclamation:

"Tell me whether I have deceived you! Is it not even more beautiful at this hour than a little while ago? Let us go down to the beach! Will

you?"

They followed her, all dominated, according to their nature, by the charm of that admirable ending of the day, and they stopped there only where the waves came up to wet the sand, distilling in the freshened air their saline vapor, which impregnated the lips.

Arlette especially enjoyed the spectacle with all the fibres of her enthusiastic and vibrating nature; and, her voice somewhat muffled, she said to Guy, instinctively sure of being under-

stood by him:

"Is it not good to feel this beauty? Oh! look at that wave quite rosy . . . and so limber! And that one! How majestic it is! It has a veritable mantle of gold and silver, the mantle of Dahut."

"Of Dahut!"

"The king of Ys's daughter!" she explained, with an astonished motion of the eyebrows, at

the idea that he could be ignorant of a legend which was so familiar to her.

"You will tell me her history?"

"Yes, in a little while, in the carriage. Now let me fully admire at my ease. It is all the same for you to wait, is it not?"

"Quite so," he said, smiling at her prayerful

tone.

He was looking direct at her close to him, her eyes sparkling, her lips open to the full pure breath that was coming from the deep and was lighting up with rose-color the gilded whiteness of her charming countenance. He surmised the existence in that little girl of a moral world, shut out from him for a long time past, a world peopled with juvenile ideas, fresh, all perfumed with poesy, adorably unaffected; ideas such as cannot be had by most of the young girls of Paris, whom real life brushes too closely to leave them in full enjoyment of delightful ignorances; ideas that come to those alone who live in a solitude where dreaming ever sees the gate wide open to it.

And a regret took hold of him for not being able to penetrate a little into that unknown; for it must be a charming thing to pry—ah! how delicately—into that new thought, into that new soul, a pleasure which he would no longer taste,

as to-morrow he would go away.

After all, it was much better, perhaps, that it was so. And so he would have no disillusion and could keep of his little Breton cousin a perfumed memory, like the honeysuckle odors which she wore in her belt the first day he had seen her.

"Well, my children," Madame Chausey called, for she had remained a little behind, "are we not going to leave? It is beginning to get cold."

With docility Madeleine obeyed. The betrothed followed her mechanically. Quite taken up with each other, how had they seen the admirable spectacle? Through what thoughts and what hopes?

Arlette, who had returned on hearing her aunt's voice, took them in with an attentive and

astonished glance.

And from Guy's lips there darted anew a ques-

tion suggested by that look:

"What is the matter? Why do you so contemplate Charlotte and Pierre? Are you thinking that, in the presence of your friend the sea they were only profane, unworthy of looking at it?"

"No, it is not that. No. . . ."

"What, then? Would it be very indiscreet to

ask you?"

"Oh, no! I was thinking that Charlotte seemed very happy at the prospect of marriage!"

"But, be it well understood, she is so! Why

should she not be?"

"Because it is very wearisome to be married! One must keep accounts, supervise the kitchen, the washing, scold the servants, become worried after the children, tell disagreeable things to one's husband, unless one tells him nothing at all, which is perhaps still more wearisome."

"What then? Great heavens! What a strange opinion you have of marriage! Where have you

learned that it brings to the woman the obligations which you lavish on her so generously?"

"I have seen clearly what my stepmother

does; and so . . ."

"And so you would not like to get mar-

ried!"

"Certainly not! I find all the men of Douarnenez detestable and ugly—except my father and the captain! and except the fishermen, almost all of whom I love! And then Madame Morgane says that men are liars, that they always make their wives very unhappy, that they are tyrants who make them weep. And all that because of Eve!"

"Why of Eve?" queried Guy, moved by an ir-

resistible desire to laugh.

"Oh, yes! Madame Morgane pretends that we have to expiate her disobedience, we poor women. Only, as far as I am concerned, I have no desire at all to expiate! This is why I will make quite sure not to get married! Why do you laugh? Is it because I have said something very ridiculous? It is not polite to laugh so at young girls!"

She had that almost imperceptible frowning of the eyebrows which gave a sudden expression of

energy to her mute countenance.

"I am not laughing at you, Arlette, I would not allow myself to do so," Guy replied, hastily, striving to become serious again. "I am only a little . . . astonished by Madame Morgane's opinions on conjugal life, considered from the . . . expiatory point of view."

" Why?"

"Because they are rather . . . unexpected."

"Unexpected? It is not, then, all the real

truth that Madame Morgane tells?"

"That is to say, she seems to me rather severe in her judgments, and all the poor men do not deserve to be so given up to the eternal bow-wows. Ask Charlotte what she thinks of it."

"What I think of what?" questioned the young girl, who had casually overheard Guy's words.

"We are going to tell you that in the carriage.

Arlette has information to ask of you."

And Arlette, without ceremony, put to her cousin a series of questions that had for their effect to bring to the young betrothed's lips the most reassuring declarations, which Arlette took in with extreme attention and an interest no less marked. Evidently it was no longer disagreeable to her that the male sex was good only to unite in a universal condemnation.

Madame Chausey was listening, very much

amused:

"Arlette, do you know what must be done to be well convinced that Charlotte does not expect to be inevitably unhappy?"

"What is it, aunt?"

"It is necessary to be present at her marriage!"

Arlette raised astonished eyes toward Madame

Chausey.

"To be present at Charlotte's marriage! Oh! that would give me pleasure—the greatest pleas-

ure! But it is not possible, since she will not

get married at Douarnenez."

"No, indeed. But if the mountain does not come to Mohammed, Mohammed can go to the mountain. You, my dear, can very well come to Paris to Charlotte's marriage."

She was startled, her eyes radiant:

"To go to Paris! Oh!"

"You will be satisfied at doing so?"

"Oh, yes! ever so much! Oh! ever so much!"

"Very well, it would give us 'ever so much' pleasure to receive you that we must positively succeed in having you . ."

"And Arlette will be one of my maids of

honor," concluded Charlotte, amiably.

"How amusing it would be! How good you

are to invite me so!"

And impetuously Arlette lavished warm, happy, childish kisses on her aunt's and her lady cousins' cheeks.

"Then it is agreed. This evening, little Arlette, we will arrange the matter with your father, so that we may carry off, when leaving,

the promise of your visit for next winter."

"Yes! But, my goodness! I did not think of it. My father could not come! and it is impossible for me to leave him! I know that he would be sad without his 'little child,' as he calls me; and I do not want him to be sad on my account!"

"Well, we will tear him away from his patients, that is all!" Guy declared, in a good-humored tone, desiring to bring back gayety to

the clouded young countenance. "In this way you will have no excuse for refusing us your visit."

"Do you really think that father will consent to leave his patients to get well of themselves?"

she asked, ardently.

"Oh, yes! He . . . he will leave an agreeable fellow-practitioner in his place. And everything will be arranged with wonderful ease!"

Like a child, she clapped her hands.

"Oh! it will be delightful! We will be so happy, he and I, both of us alone together, without having to fear being scolded by Madame

Morgane!"

They began to laugh at this outburst of joy on the part of Arlette. But she took no notice of it. The sudden prospect of that journey was so attractive to her that she forgot for a moment her regret at seeing the day drawn to a close.

Now the break had entered Douarnenez, which was quite animated on account of the return from the Pilgrimage, and was approaching the doctor's house. A carriage had stopped in front of the gate, and the gardener was taking down some trunks from it.

"For God's sake," remarked Arlette, excitedly, "has Madame Morgane perchance returned al-

ready?"

She jumped out of the break and entered the garden. In front of the stone steps a tall woman, of rather vulgar appearance, was talking in a dry and rude tone to Anaïk, who had pulled in her horns and was receiving without protest the hailstorm of words that fell on her; a lecturing that

seemed to be approved by a dull, listless young

girl with a basket in her hands.

"You say that the doctor has ordered dinner for eight o'clock only, so that his Arlette may have full time to return, without hurrying, from the Pilgrimage. Well, I tell you, I do, my girl, that you are going to prepare and serve dinner immediately, for I am the only mistress here you understand me? It would be really delightful to see me wait for a brat of a girl who goes away to play princess with her fine relatives from Paris. Let them keep her until evening, since they have taken her away. As for me, I do not wait. It would be quite silly in me to put myself out for folks who choose the moment when I am not here to come and distract themselves and dine in my house. Ah! it is a good idea to arrive so unexpectedly. One must take account of many things."

"What things?" Arlette's clear voice was heard to ask. "Indeed, if it is of that you would take account, we did not expect you at all to-

day!"

Madame Morgane turned around, and a veritable stupor was painted on her sullen countenance when she saw Madame Chausey, her daughters and the two young men reveal themselves in her presence.

"Madame Morgane, no doubt?" remarked

Madame Chausey.

Arlette's stepmother mechanically bowed her head; and Madame Chausey, perceiving her dazed silence, continued in a tone of cold and perfect politeness: "You will kindly excuse us, madam, if we are using the authority given to us by Monsieur Morgane to take all the advantage possible of his little daughter's presence, during our brief stay at Douarnenez; and we ask your permission to keep her until evening, as to-morrow we leave."

"Do as you see fit, madam," remarked Madame Morgane, who was too dazed by the suddenness of the meeting to have even the idea of showing her authority. "Moreover, Arlette will be delighted to find her sister and myself, as late as possible! She has so much affection for us!"

No one, not even Arlette, though so given to ready retorts, took up Madame Morgane's slur. But when they were in the street, Guy remarked,

philosophically:

"No one can reproach Madame Morgane with not doing herself justice when she recognized that Arlette had no desire to find herself again with her. Heavens! little Arlette, how I understand

you on this point!"

"Is it not so? It is a great pity that she did not remain longer at Chateaulin. We were so happy during the past ten days, papa, the boys and I, without her or Blanche, who resembles her . . . so much! Now, I am very much afraid that she will not travel again the whole winter!"

"But it is you who will travel! Have you forgotten already that you are going to come to see us? If Madame Morgane seems to you always at that time in a mood so far from attractive, we will keep you. Nothing is more simple. It is a matter agreed upon!"

"A matter agreed upon!" she repeated, with a happy and pleasant smile.

* * * * * * *

"You will come to see us, and we will keep

you."

They made sure to hammer these words into her mind, on the morrow of that memorable day of the Pilgrimage, whilst, in the evening, seated alone in the silent garden, she took up again, one by one, the incidents that had marked the brief stay at Douarnenez of Madame Chausey, her daughters and Guy. They were all gone now. She treasured her recollections as she would have cherished a treasure on which she was to live for months and months. Especially at that moment did the scene of the departure come back to her with strange vividness. She still felt on her countenance the affectionate kisses of her aunt and of Charlotte, the delicate touch of Madeleine's lips; she recalled the friendly pressure of Pierre's fingers; and, still more, she kept the impression of her hand imprisoned in that of Guy, so firm and at the same time so nimble; she heard him reply to her, as she said "adieu"—

"No, not adieu, but au revoir. We will expect you in Paris for Charlotte's marriage.

Your father has promised you to us!"

Was it possible, indeed, that she would make that journey? It seemed to her somewhat like those marvelous dreams that spring up in the imagination of the very young, so marvelous that one dare not even believe in them!

And yet, why should she not go to find them

again for a moment, all of them who had been good to her, so good that never would she be

able to forget them . . . oh! never!

Her eyes lost in the clear shade of that summer night, bespangled with stars, she was thinking, seeking to guess what indeed might be brought to her by the future that was approaching. She had no fear of it: on the contrary! Did not life seem to her as luminous as an orchard in bloom under the springtime sun? And, filled with a confident joy, she awaited it, she called it, that beneficent future: she desired it, having faith in its mysterious promises, offering to it her whole youth, unaffectedly certain that it would enlighten her with a nameless brightness.

CHAPTER V.

SEPTEMBER, October had passed. It was now genuine winter time, was that afternoon. The day was quickly declining, quite embrowned by a penetrating November fog which at the horizon was confounding sea and sky in one and the same grey and sombre tint, intensely melancholy, calculated to oppress even well-seasoned souls.

And more than any one was Doctor Morgane disposed to feel its effects, while he was returning toward Douarnenez, wearied by visits at a distance, in secluded hamlets. Of old he had borne without difficulty the weight of such journeys; but, as he had said to Guy de Pazanne, he was an old man before his time. In him the moral had used up the physical; and he felt himself overwhelmed by an infinite weariness that which men oppressed by life know too well —during that close of an afternoon which ended for him like to all the rest, without his having in his thoughts the fortifying vision of a fireside at which he would be awaited and loved. With the exception of Arlette, who wished his presence in his own house? Not the apathetic Blanche, cold as her mother, not the boys, at that time in the Quimper high school; not Madame Morgane, absorbed in her own personality.

Certainly, when he had married her, fifteen years before, he had not entertained for a second

the hope or even the desire of adapting himself to a new life that might bring him even a shadow of happiness. An indifference without bounds henceforward penetrated him in regard to everything that touched him alone. But faithfully had he shut his soul and his thoughts against the dear past that had fled beyond recall, resolved to do all in his power to make happy the young girl who accepted the duty of becoming Arlette's mother. He had married her because he thought her gentle and good, compassionate in regard to the incurable wound with which she knew him to be afflicted. But she was nothing of all that. There was in her only a frozen soul and a narrow mind served by a tenacious will that no power was able to conquer. Of humble origin, the granddaughter and daughter of fishermen enriched by trade, she had, while still a child, resolved to be one day "a lady," as she said; and with indefatigable patience and perseverance she had gradually taken advantage of all circumstances to bring Doctor Morgane to think of her.

Into his house she had at last entered, her ambition satisfied, secretly triumphant, strong in the unacknowledged thought that she would be absolute mistress there by reason of the rights that her money assured to her, for she came there with many jingling crowns, when the only ones the doctor had were the revenues of his profession. Never had she forgotten their difference of fortune! Only, since a very serious scene, which was enacted after many others, she no longer chanced the slightest allusion to this subject; and, on certain other occasions, there came

back to her distinctly vibrating in her ear the words of her husband declaring that never, either for himself or for Arlette, would he touch a cent of that fortune the importance of which she had,

openly this time, thrown in his teeth.

And every day more distinctly was the moral separation between them made more acute. Beside each other, they had lived as strangers whom no bond of sympathy even could bring together; he, giving himself up entirely to his profession, devoting himself to it with a sort of passion as if to escape himself; she, imperious mistress in the house, authoritative and exacting after the manner of vulgar natures, careful to assert her will on every occasion, sullenly, but deeply jealous of Arlette—jealous for her daughter, for she regarded her as of a different species from that elegant and fine little creature, who was irresistibly attractive; jealous also of the very strong bond which she suspected to exist between father and orphan child. Moreover, at every moment her instincts of domination became exasperated in the presence of Arlette's independent vivacity, for the girl's originality shocked all her ideas of a positive woman devoid of the slightest atom of imagination.

Whence came continual clashes, especially in the doctor's absence, between stepmother and stepdaughter; the one rude, aggressive, easily provoked to violence; the other prone to take umbrage, all at once excited to anger in the presence of a tyrannical will that was revolting to her and that she bore with silent impatience, quite shuddering, and only out of tenderness for her father. Nevertheless, by reason of a genuine heavenly grace, Arlette did not, on the whole, suffer in any way from this difficult situation. There was in her, indeed, a fund of native energy and elasticity, an intensity of life, of youth, of gayety, that never allowed her to become dejected under the malevolent attacks of her stepmother; and she kept it up, resolute and bold,

like a little fighting cock.

But, once her father disappeared, what would then become of her? And therein lay the incessant fear that was torturing Doctor Morgane since he saw becoming more serious the symptoms of his heart disease. This was the terrible anguish of his long sleepless nights, when one of the crises whose secret he kept obliged him to remain sitting up for hours so that the air might the better penetrate into his poor halting chest.

And afresh, on that day, he thought of this menacing future, whilst, with an instinctive impulse, he directed his horse on the deserted road on which was heard quite distinctly the rumbling of the carriage. But Douarnenez appeared, the nearest houses throwing out in profile massive shadows into the mist, which was feebly furrowed by the glimmers cast here and there from the windows with still open shutters.

The doctor stopped his carriage in front of Mademoiselle Malouzec's low little shop, from which escaped, through the window panes, a pale

and trembling light; and he entered.

"Eh! it is you, Yves?" remarked Mademoiselle Malouzec, whose countenance lit up with a

cordial smile of welcome. And she laid down her knitting to clasp the doctor's hand.

"Good-evening, Catherine."

"Good-evening; you have done well to come in. My brother will be happy to see you. He was complaining of not having received your visit to-day."

"Does his rheumatism make him suffer more?"

"The fog is bad for him, and he is weary of being a prisoner in the house. The days spent without going out are interminable to him. But, in reality, he is more in need of the friend than of the physician."

She spoke in a sonorous voice which the Breton accent rendered somewhat guttural; and, leaving the shop to the care of the little servant girl, she went through the passage that led to the dwelling, guiding the doctor toward her brother.

The latter, who was dozing, his afflicted limb stretched in front of the blazing fire, turned his

head as they entered.

"Morgane, my old friend, I was beginning to think that you were forgetting your poor invalid, like Arlette, moreover, who has not made her appearance, even for a second."

"Arlette had not told me that she would

come. She may not be able to go out."

"Undoubtedly she will be put under lock and key by her jailer!" grumbled the captain, who did not always succeed in dissembling his pronounced antipathy to Madame Morgane.

But as he was of excellent heart and feared that he had offended the doctor, he continued

immediately:

"Ah, see there, doctor, your rascally medicine will never, then, succeed in putting me again on my feet, if it does not restore to me my fine health of old? I am much put out at remaining thus transformed into an impotent!"

"Ah! my friend, do not complain too much, you who have not charge of a soul, you who do not know this torture of every minute, to feel that, from one moment to the next, one may fail to beings who are absolutely in need of you."

These words had escaped from the doctor. He regretted it, feeling that Mademoiselle Malouzec's penetrating look was falling on him. But she did not take up his words. To Yves Morgane she was a friend of too long standing not to know that he pretended to bear alone the burdens that weighed on him. And she merely asked, so as to distract him from his thoughts:

"Yves, is not Arlette's cousin to be married soon—I mean Mademoiselle Chausey? It seemed to me that your little daughter was to be maid

of honor?"

"Yes, indeed, there had been question of that. Her aunt and her cousins were charming to her during their sojourn here. They have shown an interest in her which I have had the good nature to believe real. Her cousins have even written to her. But you know my little savage. Correspondence is not her strong point. I imagine that the extreme unaffectedness of her letters may have somewhat discouraged her brilliant cousins, and now indeed six weeks have passed since we have heard them spoken of any more. What would you have? The lucky have scarcely

leisure to think of the poor devils who have to earn their daily bread with more or less trouble. It is in the order of things!"

"Yves, take care lest you be unjust."

"I assure you, Catherine, that at this moment I would be delighted to have proof of my injustice, as you say. I had taken to hoping that perhaps my Arlette was going to come into close relations with her mother's family, her only family, and that, in consequence, she might find support on that side. A veritable dream, indeed! Is it possible that I, at this moment, have again taken to dreaming! O God, it is nothing short of laughable. Acknowledge it, Catherine."

"Why do you want me to make a declaration of this sort? Thank heaven, I am not a creature of little faith, and I will never despair of anything or of anybody. Madame Chausey seemed to me too really good to forget Arlette."

"Let us hope so," concluded the doctor, with a

careless smile.

And turning around, he asked:

"What news this evening, Malouzec? The

postman has just reached you."

The captain took up the Quimper newspaper, that had been lying beside him, still enclosed in its mailing wrapper, and opened it carelessly. Suddenly his eyes, wandering over the pages, stopped so fixedly on one of them that Doctor Morgane in surprise asked:

"What is the matter, then? What do you see?"

"An item of news that would not astonish me; but, if it is true, it would be a veritable catastrophe for many people here." "What is it? What have you read?"

"A pispatch concerning Le Goanec's bank."

"To what effect is that dispatch?"

A slight quiver agitated Yves Morgane's voice. The captain seemed to hesitate in answering:

"Announcing that Le Goanec had this morn-

ing suspended payment and . . . "

"And what?"

". . . was a fugitive!"

"But that is impossible!" remarked the doctor, erecting his tall, spare form, as if to catch the breath that was failing him. "It is impossible! So safe a house!"

The captain threw back his head:

"No, not so safe! You recall the reports that have been going the rounds regarding its soundness, so far back as a few months ago. We had talked about it together!"

"Yes, it is true, we had talked of it," Monsieur Morgane repeated in a tone so strange that the captain, suddenly upset with anxiety, asked:

"Morgane, did you still have money with Le

Goanec?"

"I had all, or nearly all, that constitutes Arlette's slender fortune, what was coming to her from her mother and what I had been able to save for her. You hear, all!"

The doctor's tone was so poignant in its bitterness that Monsieur Malouzec remarked in-

stinctively:

"Morgane, do not torment yourself so because of an item of news which, after all, may indeed be false, or at least very much exaggerated."

"False! Let me look at the paper."

He read the few lines and threw the paper

down on the table.

"Why do you think I should doubt when these details are so precise? Probably by this time a dispatch has reached my house telling me of the disaster. At this moment, Malouzec, my child is as poor as the poorest girl in Douarnenez. You understand, as poor! If I were to disappear to-morrow, in a little while, as I am threatened, she would have no other resource than her stepmother's charity— And that, O God! through my fault!"

"Through your fault?" asked Mademoiselle Catherine, whose face had suddenly become so hollowed that she looked like a very old woman.

"Yes, through my fault. Malouzec, I now remember, had warned me of the reports that were going around about the Le Goanec bank. And I, instead of making inquiries, acting, and changing myself if necessary into a business man, stupidly allowed myself to be absorbed by my daily occupations, I made them as numerous as possible, ever haunted by my eternal thought, to work for the future which I wanted to assure for Arlette, as my other children have their mother's fortune. And in this way I succeed only in making her lose the little that she possessed! What a fatality, then, weighs on me! What a malediction!"

He stopped, his voice breaking down. One of the spasms that he knew too well was torturing his heart, causing acute pain in it. And a silence loaded with thoughts fell upon the room, in which the tall flames from the fire shed a joyous light. The captain, in consternation, was thinking; an intense emotion was agitating his devoted friend's heart.

But as for Mademoiselle Catherine, she was looking at the doctor in silence, ever standing, his countenance contracted by an expression of suffering that frightened her. She would have preferred to hear him complain, accuse himself, break out into bitter or violent language, than to see him so, not uttering a word, shutting up within himself the wound of this fresh blow. So great was the change in his features that a question escaped from Mademoiselle Malouzec's lips:

"Yves, you are suffering?"

"Yes, a little. It is nothing. I am asking myself whether it is better for me to set out at once for Quimper, so as to try to know . . ."

"What? At this hour you could find out nothing. From whom could you get correct information? Moreover, there is no train before

this evening. Wait till to-morrow."

"Wait! To spend an evening, then a night, with this uncertainty in my soul! Will I be ever able to do it? Ah! to learn what truth there is in it! I am going to telegraph to Quimper. In a few hours at least I shall have an answer. I shall know . . ."

He took up the paper again and, with feverish avidity, re-read the dispatch which pitilessly gave the precise details of the catastrophe, revealing it already in its entirety, giving figures that told clearly of its extent. What was the use of persisting in doubt? The disaster was complete. If it had affected him only, how much easier it would have seemed to him to bear. But it was his Arlette who was stricken; it was for her that the future threatened to be rude, as it is merciless to the poor; it was she, the dear and joyous little creature, who would perhaps know the pinch, the misery of dependent conditions, the bitterness of earning one's bread.

Of all that the doctor had the keenest perception in a moment, and anguish was torturing him all over, while a supplication of despair was

sobbing in his heart:

"To live, O God! To live longer! To live a

long time because of her!"

The captain's voice arose, rendered hoarse by emotion:

"Morgane, my old comrade, if I can be of assistance to you in any way, you know, do you not? that I am entirely at your service, and that you will give me great joy, one of the greatest joys that I can yet experience, by making the most use of me you can. Catherine and I have always considered your Arlette as being somewhat our own, and we love her as if she were our own child!"

"I know it, my friend, and I thank you for repeating it to me to-day! But at this moment you are as powerless as I in the presence of this fresh misfortune, if it is real. And I must go to make sure of it. This uncertainty is a torture!"

The two men drew close together in a warm embrace, without the captain adding a word, sure that Morgane and he understood each other, having faith in each other.

Along with Mademoiselle Malouzec the doctor

left the room. In the adjoining chamber he stopped for a minute, collecting all the force of his will to overcome the double suffering, moral and physical, that was murdering him. With a spontaneous gesture the old maid extended both her hands to him. Their eyes met and they were filled with tears.

In a hollow voice the doctor murmured:

"Would you believe, Catherine, that I cannot yet imagine the disaster to be real! It seems to me that I am having a bad dream, that in a little while I shall wake up and receive news that I was frightened like a child! How weak you must find me!"

"Weak, my poor friend! Ah! if our wretched desires meant anything, how I would wish, Yves,

to take upon myself your new trial!"

"Oh! a terrible trial! O God! if I were still certain of having time to remedy the evil that I have done! But less than any one am I sure of the morrow!"

A contraction for a second pinched Mademoi-

selle Malouzec's features.

"Yves, why did you persist in concealing that you were suffering? Why did you not have yourself treated? And most seriously, as you ought?"

"I have attended to myself; but as a physician I could not deceive myself. I will never get well. All the science in the world could do nothing for me. I am nothing more than a poor human machine used up, and my heart is affected in such a way that my months, perhaps my days, are numbered."

He spoke with a sort of calm despair, more

heartrending to listen to than a complaint; and the inexorable conviction that was in him entered brutally into her also, awakening in her a bitter

sorrow that was murdering her soul.

"That, Catherine, I say to you only, because we are very old friends and because I have absolute confidence in you. And then, there are moments when strength at last so fails as not to be able to cry out its distress, even when one is sure to be heard. But no one at this hour ought to know anything of what I have acknowledged to you. What would be the use of everybody knowing that I am condemned to death? I have your promise, Catherine?"

Gravely she said, with trembling lips:

"You have it, Yves. But I firmly believe that you are a bad judge of the condition of your health, because your uneasiness in regard to Arlette does not leave you all your clear-sightedness. Whatever happens, I swear to you, as my brother has said, that Arlette will be our child. Rest assured that never will we consider her otherwise. May this idea, if it is possible, render your trouble a little less hard to bear."

"Thanks!" he said, almost inaudibly. "What

a heart you have, Catherine!"

"Why? Because I love your child who gives even me the illusion of having, like other women, a young being to love, with all the objectless tenderness that my old heart contains? Ah! my friend, do not thank me for loving your Arlette! She has done me more good than I will ever do to her!"

She stopped abruptly, her voice choking.

A secret flame was transforming the expression of that tall, energetic and homely figure.

At that moment, perhaps, he had the intuition of what this woman could have been to him, if he had wished. Perhaps he had a confused vision of what his devastated home would have become had Catherine Malouzec entered it of old, to take the place of the dead young wife. But he did not utter a word that would betray the thought that sprang up obscurely in him; and in

silence they separated.

The fog had become even more intense; and the few passers-by appeared as fugitive shadows in the thick mist. In front of the Hotel Le Bihan a group was standing, dimly lit up by the luminous globes of the main entrance, and a sound of voices was escaping therefrom. On approaching, the doctor distinguished familiar countenances; and on all was the same expression of consternation. He asked, his heart beating with heavy thumps in his breast:

"What is the matter now?"

"Ah! it is you, doctor? Bad news this evening. The Le Goanec bank has suspended payment."

"Is that certain?"

"Yes, indeed, unfortunately. Kergorian was in Quimper to-day; and the whole town was in agitation. Le Goanec is a fugitive. He left openly yesterday morning and has not been seen since. There are many victims. Le Goanec was a veritable hypocrite. He passed for a devout man if there ever was one, and he tampered as he pleased with his clients' funds."

Yves Morgane did not listen to any more. Of what use was the information that one might give him now? It was no longer possible for him to doubt. Misfortune had beaten down upon him, so unexpectedly that he still had the confused impression from it that he was moving in a nightmare, even when, however, certainty came into his mind, with pitiless clearness, that that ruin of Arlette was true, fearfully true!

In a few mechanical phrases he answered him who had just spoken to him, clasped at random the hands that were extended toward his, and went off through the foggy night, going straight ahead, his soul crushed, entertaining the cowardly desire of seeing an end of this evil life that had

just conquered him once more.

But his unconscious steps brought him back in front of his house. No one in that dwelling must know what news and what a bleeding wound he bore within him. The phrases of commonplace condolence which Madame Morgane might perhaps have thought she ought to address to him were odious to him in advance, for he knew that they would be false. Arlette's ruin would inspire no real pity in her stepmother.

With instinctive care he silently opened the door, desiring at that moment to escape even a fugitive meeting with her. But Arlette's attentive ear had heard the slight noise of the door; and, running into the vestibule, she hurried toward him.

"Father, is it you, at last? How late you are in getting back! I was beginning to be quite

uneasy, and I was going to fly to the captain's so as to be sure that you were there."

"'To fly?' Why, dear?"

"You understand that if I had asked permission, it would certainly have been refused. So you are not too tired, father?"

"No, my beloved, not too much."

"Really?"

And her eyes, in the shadow of the vestibule, were greedily interrogating the dear countenance. "Really!" he repeated, drawing close to him,

"Really!" he repeated, drawing close to him, with an enveloping movement, the little creature whom he adored and for whom he was suffering so much at that moment.

From the depths of the room in which she was supervising a washerwoman, Madame Morgane

called with her dry voice:

"It is you, Yves? There are letters for you in your office. Anaïk is going to bring you a light."

"No, not Anaïk, I!" exclaimed Arlette, who

had already taken hold of the lamp.

"Naturally! you think only of losing time in promenades, instead of working like your sister,"

grumbled Madame Morgane.

With a look the doctor stopped a prompt reply from Arlette, that was already on her lips, and he himself, without answering, entered his office. A dim fire was burning there, scarcely warming the atmosphere of the large room, which the little lamp brought in by Arlette but dimly lighted. He let himself fall rather than sat down; and the child, as was her wont, came and crouched at his feet, her head resting on his knees. With a

caressing movement he brushed her light hair; but he remained silent, exhausted by the moral crisis through which he had just passed, scarcely thinking any longer, feeling only that she, his daughter, was there, and that still at that moment she was suffering in no way from the misfortune that had befallen her young life.

But she had raised her head a little, and she was contemplating him, uneasy at the change in

his pale countenance.

"Father, are you suffering this evening?" she asked, anxiously.

"No, dear, I am only tired, very tired."

"You are only tired? You look as if you were sad! Father, I am certain that you are sad! Do you not wish to tell your 'little one' what is the matter with you? Perhaps she could console you a little, she who loves you so much!"

Arlette's voice was quivering, for a fear was shaking her all over; but there was such tenderness in her tone, and in her eyes which she had fastened on him, that he felt therefrom all at once acute joy and sorrow. Was he then so far from strong that he thus betrayed himself in her presence? By a supreme effort of will he said, striving to resume his ordinary tone:

"My Arlette, I have had great cares indeed to-day. But I will remedy them; do not annoy yourself about them, dear. Leave me now, I

have much work to do."

And he still found the shadow of a smile with which to finish:

"You see, I have not yet even looked at my evening paper. Will you place it near the lamp?"

He spoke thus to get her away and to avoid the penetration of her animating look. She obeyed, and, distraughtly, with the finger, removed the letters laid on the desk. A joyful exclamation came to her:

"Ha! father, a letter from Paris, from my Aunt Chausey; I recognize the handwriting."

"I will look at it in a moment. Go to your

mother now."

"To fold more linen? Oh! father. It is so wearisome! And besides, what I do is never right! Then I must begin all over again. That provokes me. And I am scolded. Father, keep me longer!"

"No, dear, it is impossible," he remarked, in that tone which she never resisted. "Be patient, my beloved little child. Be patient while think-

ing that I desire it."

"Yes, father."

And the words fell from her lips with the gravity of a promise, whilst she sought her kiss once more.

The doctor heard her light step going away and being lost on the stairs. Then, with indifference, he mechanically opened with his finger the first letter that came to his hand, that from Paris, and he read:

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

"You promised to me a visit from your Arlette this winter, and I am coming to claim the child; cost what it may, you must make us the sacrifice of separating from her and must give her to us for her cousin's marriage, which will

take place in about three weeks. Send us your treasure, my dear Yves, or bring her to us, which would be better still. We will take precious good care of her, and also as long as possible, I declare to you in advance, in all honesty, for we are all desirous, my daughters, Guy and myself, to make closer acquaintance of the dear little one. Rest quite assured, my friend, that she will be to me as a real daughter, all the time that you will do me the friendship of confiding her to me, and I sincerely hope that we will succeed in spoiling her sufficiently for her not to regret her Brittany too much. You will give a favorable answer, will you not, and quite soon?

"All my compliments, I pray you, to Madame Morgane. My very tender kisses to Arlette,

with my best wishes for yourself.
"Believe me, my dear Yves,

"Yours very devotedly,
"Louise Chausey."

CHAPTER VI.

It was a matter now decided on with the doctor that Arlette should sojourn in Paris, and he had just told Madame Morgane so. Indeed, knowing her, he had clearly foreseen that she would not accept with good grace the idea that Arlette should enjoy a pleasure from which neither she nor her daughter would derive any advantage; but he did not think, on communicating this plan of travel to her, that he would provoke a scene like that which had just taken place, and from which he emerged broken, so much had he suffered from running counter to Madame Morgane's cold and pitiless animosity toward Arlette.

How much had she also striven to wound him, and in every way, not even fearing, triumphant in the full possession of her own fortune guarded carefully, to reproach him with the financial disaster of which he was a victim, and which she

partly guessed at despite his reticence!

And it was at the mercy of that envious and bad woman that Arlette would find herself were he to disappear—ere long, perhaps, considering how he was threatened. Had he hesitated on the reply to be made to Madame Chausey, his decision would have been dictated to him as irrevocable by this conversation. To him, indeed, it was an immense sacrifice to separate himself from his

child, at a time when the days of his existence were numbered—he was terribly convinced of it. But there was question of Arlette's happiness, of her future, and, in the presence of that reason so grave, all objections were wiped out. No, he must not lose the chance of a coming together which, in its sequel, might have a great influence

on the little girl's fate.

This opinion was also that of Mademoiselle Catherine, for the doctor, fearing lest he would weaken when confronted by his ardent desire not to part with Arlette, had come to take counsel of his old friend; and, like him, she had deemed that sojourn at Paris useful to Arlette, offering herself even, with the decision and readiness that were peculiar to her, to escort the child to her aunt, since Monsieur Morgane could not abandon his patients. This, at least, was the reason which he had alleged to Mademoiselle Malouzec; the truth was, he knew he was too exhausted to bear the fatigue of two long hurried journeys; and now that Arlette had more need than ever of him, he became in regard to his own health exceedingly and unwontedly cautious, struggling with all his knowledge against his disease.

She was about to leave, then, and to leave soon, to return she knew not when. Circumstances would decide that. Did not Madame Chausey ask her for the whole winter? Ah! how long those weeks would be when he would have to live isolated in that house, a veritable stranger dwelling to him when she was absent from it. O God! how, after having heard so many cruel words, he needed to hear her fresh voice, her

happy little girl's hearty laughter, to feel the caress of her warm kisses! Where was she?

Hearing Blanche pass by his office door, he

called and asked:

"Where is your sister?"

She stopped on the threshold, with sullen expression:

"I do not know. She is always out. After all, I think she is at Mademoiselle Malouzec's."

The doctor did not answer all at once. He was thinking, taking in at a glance that young girl of fifteen, who had already the stature of a woman and bore herself, in his presence, stiff and formal, almost morose, without a spark in her spiritless grey eyes. Was it his fault, then, if she showed herself thus to him, without freedom or tenderness? Nevertheless, he had been a good father to her. Even when she was quite small, he had sought to penetrate into that sealed soul, to open that rather slow intellect, without aims or aspirations; he had striven to bring the two sisters close to each other, different as were their natures. It was trouble in vain. Blanche had remained the same, revealing herself gradually quite like her mother. Thoughtfully he again asked:

"Why do you never go to Mademoiselle Malouzec's with your sister?"

Squarely she replied in her clear voice:

"Because I get weary there. She and Arlette are ever chatting together about things that do not interest me, flowers, books, the poor. Do I know? I prefer to remain working with mamma."

Ever standing in the open doorway, she seemed as if waiting to be let go. He guessed at her secret desire.

"I will not keep you, my child. You can go

to work."

"Not now; mamma is waiting for me in the

parlor to see the rector."

She closed the door with a formal movement. And, once he no longer heard the noise of her heavy footfall in the vestibule, he went out with a sort of haste, as if it had been the atmosphere of that large dull house that was weighing on him, to such a degree as to make each beat of his heart painful. At Mademoiselle Catherine's he did not remain, so eager was he to be alone with Arlette. But when they were outside, he asked her with tender solicitude:

"You are well covered? Sufficiently so not to catch cold while going with me as far as Ploumar'ch, where I am going to see little Kerdec,

who sprained himself yesterday."

"Surely not, I will not feel cold! Oh! father, how good you are to have come in search of

me! It is well, quite well!"

Truly she was looking at him with such a radiance of pleasure in her eyes that he felt the burden of life less overwhelming on his shoulders. They entered upon the road that overlooked the sea; she was walking by his side with her brisk step, her lips open the better to breathe the strong breeze from the deep that was passing over her like a great enveloping caress, bringing a deeper rose-tint to her cheeks, intensifying the purple splendor of her lips, raising around her forehead

her light hair with brownish gold reflexes. They were proceeding, she chatting and joyous, he appeased by the irresistible charm of that youth in bloom and yet seized again gradually by the thought that he must make known to her Ma-

dame Chausey's demand.

The odd impression held him back that, when he would have spoken, the child would no longer be all to him, as she was at that moment. That unknown man whom he was going to call into the presence of that young thought would immediately attract to himself something of her. It was fatal. What was the use of cowardly recoiling? And he asked:

"Arlette, would you be satisfied to go to Paris?"

"To go to Paris, I?"

"Yes, you. Would that give you pleasure?"
"To go there with you? Oh! father, it would be delightful! But why is that to be? Tell me, papa! Oh! tell me quickly? Does my aunt, then, ask

She dared not finish.

"Yes, I have received a letter from Madame Chausey claiming your presence at the marriage of your Cousin Charlotte."

"True? My aunt has written that to you?

And she asks me for sure? Seriously?"

The shadow of a smile passed over the doctor's lips, so beneficent was it to see that unaffected joy on the part of Arlette-like to the clear blaze of the fire warming a poor frozen being.

"She invites you for good and all, and with such amiability that I am quite ready to confide

you to her, if you so wish!"

"Oh! if I so wish!"

She stopped short, anxious, in the presence of a sudden fear.

"Papa, why do you say 'to confide me'? Are

you not coming with me?"

"It would not be possible, my dear child. I cannot leave Douarnenez; you know that well."

"And you will send me to live down there in Paris, all alone! Oh! father, it is impossible! I do not want to leave you, never, never! I do not wish to do so, and I cannot! What would we do without each other, we who have never

been separated?"

With a sudden jump she had bounded toward her father, pressing herself against him in that childish attitude that was familiar to him. And, for a second, they both remained silent, equally dear as they were to each other, closely united in that solitude already bemisted by the approach of winter twilight. The doctor laid his hand on the young head leaning on his heart, palpitating with tenderness, and said, with an effort to put a little pleasantness into his tone:

"We would not leave each other for very long, my beloved. We would write to each other a great deal, such long letters that it would be al-

most as if we were chatting together!"

"Would that suffice for you, father? It would cause you no anxiety to know that I was far

from you?"

"I would be happy above all, my dear, to know that you were in a family fully disposed to show much affection for you. Recall how

charming to you your aunt showed herself all at once."

"Yes, that is true."

She murmured these words in a dreamy voice. Her hand ever glided under her father's arm, she pressed close to him, who had resumed his walk toward the low cottage in Ploumar'ch whither he was going, now quite near.

"Yes, they were good, very good, my aunt,

my cousins, and he also . . . Guy!"

"And they would be so again. They would show my Arlette a corner of that world which she is so desirous of knowing! They would transform my little savage into a real young lady."

"Oh! father, it would not be possible. Never would I succeed in resembling Charlotte and

Madeleine; they are too refined for that!"

The doctor gave a faint smile in answer to this humble avowal, guessing at the mysterious work that was being done in that juvenile soul, troubled by the sudden prospects raised up before it. Pensively she asked:

"Father, if your 'little one' was going without you to Paris, you would not become weary

of her, really?"

"I would think that my 'little one' is in good surroundings, well loved, and I would patiently await the moment when she would write to me to come and take her away."

"You would come as soon as I called you?"

"Immediately, as soon as you would give a sign. And, who knows? perhaps once in Paris it would take you a long time to get the desire to make me a sign!"

"Oh! that is impossible, since I would not be

near you!"

She had said these words in such a tone springing from her heart that Monsieur Morgane jumped, and a penetrating sweetness passed through his soul. They had arrived in front of the cottage where the doctor was expected. He detached Arlette's arm, ever clasped against his, and in the tone that he ever had for her alone, he said:

"While I am going to see my patient, think, dear, of all that we have just been talking about; and you will decide yourself of the final answer

that I am to send to your aunt."

She inclined her head, and, dreamily, sat down on the only bench in the little garden, from which the view stretched out very far over the darkened horizon of the sea. A deep silence was all around her, animated only by the plaintive song of the waves. But did she hear them that day? Her face resting on both her hands crossed on each other, she was thinking, troubled by her father's words.

Indeed she had kept unforgotten the memory of the invitation addressed to her by Madame Chausey, on their return from the Kergoat Pilgrimage; but never had she fully believed that she could comply with it. And yet, here was the dream within reach of being realized, made realizable in fact. She, so curious of novelty, so greedy of action, so lively of imagination, had all of a sudden the possibility of casting a glance at that world to which Douarnenez seemed to her the small, very small entrance. And this idea alone

had to her a magic and attractive charm that the single idea of leaving her father could weaken. But did not the doctor assure her that the time of separation would quickly pass? She had absolute and unaffected faith in his word; no matter what he might have said to her, she would have believed it, as one believes those whom one loves above all.

To go to Paris! To see again her charming lady cousins! To see again also her Cousin Guy! If Arlette had been capable of unraveling what was passing in her mind, she would have perceived that now the heroes of her readings, whether they were valiant knights or simple gentlemen belonging to the society of to-day, invariably took on the appearance of a man of tall stature, at the same time spare and robust, their hair cut brush-like over their broad forehead, their eyes very bright and somewhat mocking, their smile pleasant, lit up by beautiful teeth under a tawny blond mustache. Now, that man very closely resembled that Guy de Pazanne whom chance had formerly thrown all of a sudden in her way. By merely turning her head a little she could see that spot on the road where, for the first time, she had noticed him in the traits of a stranger who was contemplating her with curiosity; where for the first time he had spoken to her.

Then, how they had chatted together! for, in a very short time, he had inspired her with a strange confidence, attracting her at the same time that he repelled her somewhat. And now, she had but a word to say, and she would see

him again. She would go to live where he lived; she would know what he knew; she would love what he loved, perhaps.

To go to Paris! These four words were budding in her young brain, and they there awakened all sorts of uncertain and confused images, while she remained with her eyes lost toward the grey horizon. It was as if, all of a sudden, a fold of the impenetrable screen that shut out the world from her had suddenly been removed, letting a ray of unknown light be filtered to her. Behind that screen, what was there?

A voice near her startled her. It was that of her father, who came out of the cottage and

gently asked:

"What is my Arlette thinking of, with an air

so grave?"

A deep blush ran over the child's cheeks, as she was suddenly snatched from her vague dreaming.

"I am thinking of the journey of which you

have spoken to me."

"Does it frighten you, then? Would you prefer to give it up?"

"Oh! no," she remarked, somewhat hastily.

At that moment it would have caused her extreme regret to see the mysterious screen hermetically closed.

Father, do you desire that I go to "No.

Paris?"

He hesitated for a second, collecting all his will so that his voice should not tremble.

"I desire it very much, my child."

She murmured, almost frightened at his reply:

"Then I will go, and I will try not to be too

unhappy on finding myself far from you."

Without a word, he leaned down and kissed the little face raised toward his own, on which shone candid eyes—a child's eyes, Guy de Pazanne had found, and he was accustomed to see woman's eyes in those of the young girls whom

he ordinarily met.

And in silence, their minds full of thoughts, they returned toward the country, which the evening mist was enveloping. In the distance, lights were illumining the window panes, furrowing the night with their trembling flame, and under the darkened sky was profiled in black the lengthened shadow of a bell tower.

Arlette asked:

"Father, come with me into the church. Do you wish to? I need to say a prayer for you!"

"Yes, my beloved, let us go in!"

The church was quite dark. Alone, at some distance from one another, candles bestarred the darkness, and their sparkling light fell on the white bonnets of some women kneeling on the

stone floor, telling their beads.

Arlette knelt like them, like a true Breton girl, murmuring with all the ardor of her believing soul the words of prayer that came bounding from her heart. And her father, whom cruel life had made skeptical, yet poured forth a supreme appeal toward the mysterious Being whom his daughter was invoking with so much faith to the effect that the future might be indulgent to the little creature who was so passionately dear to him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE train was ever rolling on with its giddy express rapidity. Mademoiselle Malouzec was asleep, her head leaning a little forward on the rather straight bust, whose rigidity even the fatigue of the long journey did not succeed in breaking, and the coach lamp was casting on her face reddish reflections that brought out its wrinkles, hardening her ordinarily lively and smiling expression. Arlette keenly noticed this, as she perchance turned her head toward her. It seemed to her that all of a sudden she found herself with a strange woman, a Mademoiselle Catherine no longer bearing any resemblance whatever to her whom she had known until then. And an odd sensation of solitude passed through her impressionable soul. Nothing, moreover, any longer distracted her. Outside, the night, a starless night, reigned fully impregnated with a cold that was gradually invading the coach; and one would have said that the train was running between two walls of impenetrable darkness, beyond which extended that world that so strongly aroused Arlette's curiosity. But suddenly that world almost frightened her.

In the silence of that coach of dull aspect, where were heard only the incessant noise of the wheels on the rails and the shrill sound of the whistle, a sudden fear was awakened in her at the idea that she was going to find herself all alone in the bosom of a family whom in reality she scarcely knew. Anxiously did she seek to see them again one by one, those relatives, almost strangers to her, to see them again such as their image had been engraven on her memory: Madame Chausey, with her kindly smile; Charlotte, laughing and amiable as Madeleine; Guy, a tall, handsome young man, who gave her somewhat the impression of considering her as a living doll, amusing to hear chatting, to see coming and going, but who, at the same time, showed himself cordially attentive to her and looked at her occasionally with eyes from which raillery was indeed absent.

At that moment, in truth, it was necessary for her thus to recall them all, for, like the buzzing of an importunate fly, there came back to her the perfidious and malevolent insinuations of her sister Blanche in regard to her sojourn in Paris; Madame Morgane's no less discouraging reflections on the far from flattering impression that would be produced, in very elegant society, by the arrival of a little Breton girl without any knowledge of the ways of the world. Against all that Arlette had taken no precaution, so much was she cheered up by the confidence placed by her father in the reception she would meet with from Madame Chausey. But now her father was afar off, ah! very far from her. And at thought of this her heart swelled with keen regrets reawakening all the sorrow experienced at the moment of taking her last farewell, inundating her cheeks with scalding tears. Oh! why

had she set out? Why had he tried so much to get her to go away?

How near Paris was already! There was Mademoiselle Catherine awake, getting up and collecting her small packages. Arlette passed her handkerchief over her eyes and, her brow leaning against the window, watched the steady appearance of the thousands of lights that announced the great city. From moment to moment they became more brilliant, more numerous; and dark shadows of houses were vaguely outlined. On the widened road on which the train ran there were long lines of coaches standing still, and there in its turn the mass of the station was outlined under the blinding brilliance of the electric lights. A few minutes more, then a few seconds, and, noisily, the convoy will be engulfed under the glass roof.

"Paris! all out!" exclaimed an invisible em-

ployee who was running alongside the train.

Arlette stood up, not really knowing at that moment whether or not she was satisfied to arrive at the end of her journey. A harsh light was falling from the milk-white globes, inundating the station, lighting up the multitude of human creatures who were moving agitatedly in all directions, were calling, were answering, were filling with a dull murmur that great hall in which the engine of the train halted with a plume of vapor and a strident, whistling noise.

"Come, quick, my little one, let us get down," remarked Mademoiselle Malouzec, picking up her packages; "otherwise your aunt will believe that we missed the train, and she will go away." "And will leave us? Oh! miss, let us hurry!" She jumped out of the coach, followed by Mademoiselle Catherine; and both, carried along by the wave of travelers, directed their steps toward the gate surmounted by the word "Sortie" (exit).

"I am sure that there she is! I recognize her small figure!" suddenly remarked a clear, ring-

ing male voice.

On raising her head, Arlette perceived the countenance of a man whom she had not forgotten and who was smiling on her, emerging from a deep fur collar.

"My Cousin Guy! Yes, it is I indeed! Help us to get out of this crowd! I am going to get

lost!"

"Not at all!" he said, pleasantly, "since we are here now to guard you. Louise, this way; here is our little traveler with Mademoiselle Malouzec."

Making an opening in the crowd, he dragged behind him Arlette, who was stunned by so much life, and the child, without knowing how the thing happened, found herself surrounded, caressed, embraced by three women, equally elegant and pretty, who spoke to her all sorts of affectionate words of welcome. She let herself be so treated, answering somewhat at random, in the confusion of that first meeting, hearing Mademoiselle Malouzec also talking, and scarcely understanding her words.

When she resumed a little self-control, she noticed in front of her her two lady cousins, as attractive as at Douarnenez, now in their winter

costume, then her aunt, whose lips opened on beautiful teeth, just like Guy's, which shone most evenly under his mustache, whilst he looked at her with that amused eye which she

had already noticed in him in Brittany.

"Little Arlette, what ails you?" he asked at the same time. "How you are looking at us! Do you not recognize us? As for me, I clearly recognize your eyes, though they no longer have exactly their same expression. For the moment they are the eyes of a little frightened gazelle."

"All this crowd of people is frightening, and

so is this noise!" she said, in an undertone.

She had the impression that she was living in

a dream, in a very fatiguing dream.

"She can stand no more of it, the poor dear," interrupted Madame Chausey. "And then, she must be frozen after such a journey! Let us return quickly, so as to get her warm and to give her some dinner. Guy, see, then, that some one is attending to their baggage. You will have it sent. We are all going to leave."

And, turning toward Mademoiselle Malouzec,

she concluded graciously:

"You will come with us, miss. We are carrying you off also."

"Madam, you are very kind, and I thank you

very much. But I am expected . . . "

"Expected? Oh! Mademoiselle Catherine, let me tell you that you have all the appearance of

giving me a lame excuse!"

"And yet, madam, I am telling you the naked truth. I am acquainted here with a woman from Douarnenez who keeps a small hotel; and I have written to her. She has reserved a room for me for this evening. Excuse me if I do not accompany you, as you have been so amiable as to invite me; but old plants, in order to grow well, must not be transplanted to a different kind of soil! It is so far a great deal, for an old Breton woman of my class, to find herself so far from Brittany."

She was laughing heartily, and she was even much more sincere than Madame Chausey might have supposed. The truth was that she did not feel herself at all at ease, carried away as she was in the Parisian atmosphere which was that of Madame Chausey and of her daughters. She

concluded:

"Again I say very many thanks, madam, for your invitation. If I do not disturb your arrangements, I will go to-morrow to see the little girl, who is indeed in a sense my child, as I have seen her as a doll baby!"

On both cheeks she warmly embraced Arlette, who threw herself around her neck, and then clasped the hands of the two young ladies and of their mother. The latter, ever attentive, said at

once to her brother:

"Guy, you will accompany the lady to her carriage. We are going to look up ours. You

will come to it to say adieu to us."

Courteously he escorted Mademoiselle Malouzec, who protested against him doing so, trying to keep her vast traveling bag in her hand. But Guy insisted with such good grace that he gained possession of it, and she had to capitulate and do whatever was desired by that young man who, she thought, had the bearing of a prince in his furred cloak. For the first time in her life she allowed herself to be treated as a lady, and forgot for a moment her prejudices against "the gentlemen of Paris."

"Then this evening, Guy, is it not?" asked Madame Chausey. "You will come for a little

while before going to the Français?"

"Yes, assuredly."

"Cousin, are you not coming in with us?" remarked Arlette from the inside of the carriage.

And there was an almost imperceptible disap-

pointment in her tone.

"Alas! my cousin, I do not dine at home, but I will not fail to go and pay you my visit of welcome this evening, to know whether you are not too much displeased with Paris. So long, Arlette."

"So long, Guy," she answered, amused at so familiarly pronouncing her handsome cousin's

name.

He bowed while shutting the door and saluted

for the last time as the carriage rolled off.

If, a few hours later, any one had asked Arlette what she had been doing since leaving the railway station, she would have had great difficulty in telling it clearly, for it seemed to her, beginning with that very moment, that she had been more that ever carried off into real dreamland. In her memory she kept at first the confused vision of many streets traversed by the carriage, set off with the tall dark houses; then very many shops also; with a swarm of carriages and fugitive black forms that she was told were passers-by. Then the coupé stopped. She had

ascended a broad stairway, the steps of which disappeared under a carpet that yielded to the feet. She had seen open before her a succession of rooms that appeared to her worthy of figuring in a palace, until the moment when her aunt's affectionate voice had said to her:

"Here, darling, you are at home!"

Her "at home" was a smiling room, hung with Japanese stuff of odd designs on a brown background; a lamp overhung with a clear shade was burning there, and violets in full bloom in a crystal vase impregnated it with a very sweet odor. She had a vague recollection of having shown her extreme delight with a room just as pretty, in words that won for her kisses mingled with laughter, on the part of her aunt and Charlotte; moreover, she was speaking at random, in accordance with her successive impressions. Then Charlotte had escorted her to dinner, and more than ever, in that dining-room so different from that at Douarnenez, she had an even more intense sensation of living in a dream, this time a bright dream, like to a fairy tale. Was she not really little Cinderella carried off to her godmother's?

Did she in reality thus see around her those new faces that were smiling on her? Had she thus before her eyes a table blooming with red cyclamens, bearing crystals that were iridescent in the lamplight, silver dishes marked with a large figure presented to her by a servant bearing the solemn mien of an office holder in the performance of ministerial duty.

When she wanted to collect a little of her

wandering and capricious ideas, as if they were wild butterflies, those ideas of hers escaped as if they could not be collected. She did not succeed in resurrecting in her confused thoughts the memories of the day preceding, in seeing again the cold house in Douarnenez and its smiling garden, Mademoiselle Catherine's low shop, in finding again even the faintest image that she had had of her father in the Breton station. Even the lineaments of that beloved countenance became vague, indistinct, mixed. And, weary of this useless and enervating search, she at last suddenly dreamed:

"I will see him this evening when I shall be all alone! How happy it would be for me to

know how good to me all are!"

And then dinner was over; and now Arlette had just returned to the parlor which had wrung from her her first exclamation of admiration on her arrival at her aunt's, for she had never noticed in any Breton house such furniture, with pure silk, nor such palms with splendidly developed leaves, nor so many flowers distributed profusely in baskets and vases, on tables, mantelpiece and grand piano.

"Well, little fay, of what are you thinking, with such serious mien?" Charlotte asked, caressing Arlette's hair, who had made a complete con-

quest of her.

"I am not thinking, I cannot! My ideas no longer obey me. They are in a whirlwind. They are frolicking from right to left. They are taken up just as much as my eyes. It is even rather fatiguing!"

"Especially when one has been traveling for eighteen or nineteen hours. To-morrow, if you keep cool, you will see without fatigue, and we will do our best that you do not get tired of

Charlotte stopped for a second; then, mischiev-

ously, she concluded:

". . . of Madame Morgane."

"Of Madame Morgane? Oh! if you knew how delightful it is to be far from her and no

longer to hear oneself getting scolded!"

She had spoken with such conviction that Charlotte burst into laughter. All at once her cheeks became so deeply purple that her cousin

had pity on her.

"I am teasing you, dear. And, to escape me, you would like very much, I am sure, to take refuge at the piano, which seems to tempt you? Will you not give us a little music? It would be quite gracious on your part!"

"Oh! no, not this evening. I could not sing this evening, as I ordinarily did when near papa. I could not. But it would give me so much

pleasure to hear you, yes, you!"

"I, child! I have not touched my piano for so many days that I do not remember. When one is engaged to be married, as you will know later on, Arlette, one no longer does anything but shopping! That is positive," she jocosely insisted, while Arlette was examining her without being able to say a word, asking herself whether she was joking or not. "But Madeleine will play for you all you wish!"

"That will not weary her?"

"Oh! not at all; on the contrary! she is fanatically fond of music, judging from the hours of study that she gives to it every day."

"And I can go and listen to her in the conservatory? I like so much to hear music with-

out seeing whence it comes!"

"What? Are people so Wagnerian at Douarnenez? Come, little girl, do as seems agree-

able to you."

"Whither are you sending her, Charlotte?" Madame Chausey asked from a distance. "To her bed? That is what would be best for her. It must be that she can hold out no longer, the poor little girl."

"Oh, no! I am no longer fatigued at all," Arlette protested, animatedly. "Do not send me

away to my room yet, I entreat you!"

It was true that she no longer felt any fatigue. But even had it been otherwise, assuredly she would not have wished to retire to rest at that time. Had not Guy said that he would come? And for her. . . . What would he think when he discovered that she had already gone to sleep like a baby that is sent to bed imme-

diately after dinner?

Madeleine had obligingly sat down at the piano. Arlette slipped into a corner of the conservatory from which the piano was invisible, and she was listening. From her retreat she saw, at the other end of the parlor, Charlotte and her betrothed in deep conversation, and Madame Chausey approaching them. All three took to considering papers that the young man drew from his portfolio. Then from the piano a

harmony arose, and Arlette shut her eyes the

better to collect her impressions.

Madeleine's playing was, like herself, correct and refined, the playing of a very well-bred young lady, who betrays but little of herself and is revealed only as the pupil of a talented professor. But on the being, passionately fond of music that Arlette was, the slightest harmony had incomparable influence. What was there, then, in the page by Chopin, which Madeleine was playing with such real expression that should make Arlette thrill all over while listening to it? The broad sonorous waves bounding from the ivory seemed to envelope her. And, in proportion as they rose—strange as it may seem-they took to reawakening in her heart the vision so much desired of the quiet house in Douarnenez where her father was. Her eyes ever closed, being no longer distracted by the outside world, she found herself again in the office in which she spent so many delightful moments with him. At that time he must be there! What was he doing? Was he not suffering from knowing that she was so far, far away, so far from him? For hours and hours must have passed since she reached Paris. Perhaps at that moment he was thinking of her. He was regretting having let her go. In her also was reawakened the bitter sorrow of the separation, the anguish of which she had already felt for the first time in the darkened coach; and, gradually, silent tears were gliding down her cheeks without her being even conscious of them. A need for tenderness, a burning thirst for being no longer alone,

for hearing a loved word, for revealing to some one or to something her moral distress, was grad-

ually penetrating her irresistibly.

And yet she dared not go away down there, to the other end of the parlor, to ask for aid against her isolation from Madame Chausey and the engaged couple, ever absorbed in their conversation; Madeleine was now playing a scherzo with a quickness that one would not have expected of her who was so calm! Under her fingers the notes rolled, pressed on one another as, on the shore of the Ris there pressed on one another the thousands of drops that made the beautiful, nimble waves so loved by Arlette. Ah! how many hours were going to elapse before she would see them again, before she would revisit that spot of Breton land where her heart was!

Suddenly she sprang up. Through the sonorous notes emerging from the piano there came to

her ears Guy's gladsome voice calling her:

"Arlette, little Arlette, where are you concealed! Ah! I have found you! It is impossible for you to dissemble any longer. I see the toe of your shoe, a veritable Cinderella shoe."

Guy advanced toward her. He seemed as if shocked on meeting the moist look of those eyes with the joyous brilliance of which he was es-

pecially acquainted.

"Arlette, what ails you?"

"Nothing ails me. I am listening to the music!"

"It is the music that is making you weep? Why are you weeping?"

"Because I am very silly," she remarked, as

she hastily plugged her handkerchief against her

moist eyes.

He smiled, in spite of himself, a smile that was almost immediately lost under his blond mustache.

"That is not a reason. You do not wish to tell me what ails you? Has any one of us caused you pain? If so, it was quite involuntarily. We were all so anxious to make you love your so-

journ among us!"

The somewhat teasing flame in Guy's look was extinguished in an expression of affectionate solicitude, and the tone of his voice had become very gentle. She really guessed that he was uneasy about her tears. Then her heart distended a little, and a faint smile glided over her yet trembling lips:

"Do not be disturbed on my account! I assure you that it is stupid on my part to weep! I am by no means unhappy among you. Only . . . while Madeleine was playing, I all at once took to thinking of . . . home, of my father! I felt myself so far away that . . ."

"That you regretted very much having allowed yourself to be attracted away from your home. Poor Arlette! Poor little bird away from its nest!"

She seemed to him so young in the simplicity of her grief that the desire instinctively came to him to draw her on as one draws on sorrowing children in order to console them with appearing kisses. But he merely said in the same affectionate voice:

"Arlette, do not weep, I entreat you. Do you

not know that you would fill me with remorse? How badly we must be practising hospitality toward you, when you feel so much like an exile

among us!"

"Oh! no, do not think me too much like an exile! It is the first moment! I am not yet accustomed to having no one to whom to say all that I have in my mind, to whom to speak of home! And then, also, I am afraid lest I tire you all! I find myself so insignificant and imperfectly reared in comparison with my cousins!"

She spoke in a tone of distress so sincere that Guy was not so cruel as to smile in the presence of that avowal; but he asked in an encouraging

tone:

"Are you fishing for compliments from me

when you say such things?"

"Oh, no! it is because I think them! When my stepmother so repeated to me on all possible occasions, I did not believe her. But now, I am no longer any good at all! I am sure that I am going to do many stupid things, and so much the more as I cannot ask any one to aid me in shunning them!"

"And as for me, I am quite certain, on the contrary, that you will not commit any of them. Moreover, if you have the least need in the world of assistance, have you not my sister and your

cousins?"

"Oh! never would I dare to have recourse to them!"

"And why not?"

Arlette lowered her voice a little:

"They intimidate me too much! And then,

if they knew me as I am, they would have nothing to do but not love me any more at all! I would perhaps make the same impression on them as I have made on Madame Morgane! Madeleine especially intimidates me. She is so reasonable, so serious, so gentle. Quite the opposite of me indeed! When I shall have lived some time with her, I am afraid she will find me a real monster!"

Guy this time took to laughing heartily:

"I think you are running no risk of this sort.

But, tell me, do I intimidate you also?"

Her limpid eyes plunged into those of the young man, which had lost their bantering expression, and in all sincerity she answered:

"No, you do not intimidate me, especially at this moment when you show no sign of making fun of me. Men, moreover, frighten me much less than women. I have never seen them but

good, whilst women . . ."

"Well, then, do you know what little Arlette must do? When the need arises, you must use unscrupulously whatever of worldly experience I have to offer you, have recourse to it as soon as you are embarrassed, as soon as I can be of use to you in any way."

She listened to him convinced, delighted, not daring to believe in the words which she heard.

"And I will be able to tell you all that I wish, to ask you all that I wish, to speak to you of whatever interests me, as I did to the captain?"

"Most certainly!" Guy replied, amused at hearing himself put on the same level as the captain.

"And that will not weary you?"

"On the contrary, I will be extremely proud if you really wish to do me the honor of considering me as a great friend to whom you will be able to speak as much as you wish of your home, of what you are holding in your heart, of what is either pleasure or pain to you."

"Oh! thanks! thanks!" she said, with an outburst of gratitude, "Guy, you are delightful!"

But at that very moment a wicked devil was whispering in her ear the so oft repeated words of Mademoiselle Malouzec on the little confidence that one must have in men's discourse.

And, disturbed in her joy, she anxiously asked: "Do you really think, Guy, all that you are saying?"

"What, do I think so?"

"Yes. It is not merely amiable phrases intended to give me pleasure, to console me?"

"What skepticism, Arlette? Whither are you

going in search of those mean suppositions?"

"Oh! Guy, do not be angry." But Mademoiselle Catherine assures me that gentlemen in Paris are always paying compliments to the ladies and that there is not a particle of truth in their words!"

"Well, Mademoiselle Catherine is not indulgent to the gentlemen of Paris! All, however, are not deserving of such severity. There are exceptions. Mademoiselle Catherine would so acknowledge herself if she remained a little while in our city. I assure you, Arlette, that, on this head, when there is question of you, I have the right in conscience to claim my place among the exceptions!"

"Truly?"

"Truly; do you believe me now?"

Again she raised her bright eyes toward him. No, decidedly, he did not seem to be jesting with her. And she was right in judging thus of him. To him she had suddenly become a sort of little sister, very attractive with that simplicity and that complete absence of feminine vanity that gave her genuine originality. He repeated in the same friendly tone:

"Do you believe me?"

"Oh! yes. And it is so much better to believe you."

"Then be persuaded that I came back this

evening for your sake alone."

"For my sake?"

"Yes, to bid you welcome officially. You see clearly that I am accoutred after the manner of

a man who goes out in the world."

It was true. She had not remarked it, in her ignorance of worldly usages. He was in a dress coat, with some Parma violets blooming in his lapel, and his elegant and tall form was marvel-ously adapted to that evening costume. Seeing that she was examining him without answering, he asked curiously:

"Why are you studying me so with large attentive eyes? Am I dressed wrong side out?"

"Oh! What an idea! I am looking at you because I find you all right!"

"You are too good, my cousin," he remarked,

bowing and very much amused.

"Why is she too good?" questioned Madeleine, who had just arisen from the piano.

Arlette's cheeks became purple; she was suddenly seized with the vague consciousness that she had said something entirely out of place.

"Ah! Guy, do not repeat my words, I entreat

you," she implored.

Madeleine in surprise asked:

"What? is it a secret?"

"No, not a secret. I will tell you of what there is question at another time, when we shall be both alone! You will allow me, will you not?"

Be it well understood that Madeleine allowed, and Arlette, relieved of her uneasiness, concluded in peace and reassurance her first evening in Paris.

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH her face leaning against the window pane, after having raised the blind halfway, Arlette was looking out, awaiting the moment when her aunt and Madeleine were going to leave the house to get into the coupé that was waiting for them. A few seconds more of patience, and they appeared, crossing the sidewalk. Then, ready to enter the carriage, they raised their heads toward the window and caught a glimpse of a slender shadow; at this they made a friendly sign of adieu to the child, whom Madame Chausey's excessive care kept in the house because of a cold.

Arlette was not very ill! At Douarnenez she would scarcely have taken any notice of this cold, and would have walked out freely as ordinarily in the open air. But Madame Chausey, being very much afraid of all maladies, showed extreme prudence even in regard to the slightest indispositions; and she had deemed it wise not to expose Arlette to the biting temperature of that winter day.

Arlette, on her part, was by no means frightened at a few hours of solitude. An attractive idea had, moreover, sprung up in her brain, as soon as she knew that she was not going out, namely, to read carefully again in peace the diary that she had scrawled since her arrival in Paris, and thus to live over again the ten or more delightful weeks that she had already spent there.

Ten weeks and over! Scarcely did she believe it herself. So as not to have any doubt of it, she must truly have the proof, by counting the days on the little calendar on which was marked with a stroke the date of her arrival. How they had fled, sweet, charming, imperceptible, those days that, in advance, at Douarnenez, she thought must be so limited in number! She was mistaken, then, in thinking that she could not live with pleasure away from her father? Nevertheless, God knows with what ardent tenderness she ever loved him; how much she mingled his memory with all that she was doing; how she longed for his letters and answered them in veritable volumes that were further completed by her diary! A diary, however, which the doctor would read only when she returned, for it was a friend from which she did not wish to be separated.

Even that very morning she had received from him one of those very long chats which she read and re-read, so as to know them by heart, Guy pretended. She took up the sheets once more, running over them greedily, as if it was the first time they had come before her gaze; then, pensive, she thought for a moment, her eyes sunk in the bright flame of the fire, and through her thinking there passed altogether the distant visions of her Breton home and the quite recent images of her life as a Parisian girl. They were decidedly sweet to call up, were those recollections, since, to resuscitate them still better, she

went off to look in her little desk for the already numberless pages that had sprung into being under her alert and capricious pen, guided by the need of expansion innate with her. And with her fingers slipped through her hair and her head bowed, she set to reading, letting her glance run first over the earlier pages:

"NOVEMBER 10.

"Well, Paris is not at all as I imagined it. And even at the first moment it caused me a disillusion. I expected, I now notice, to find a sort of marvelous city like those of the tales, filled with palaces, with I know not exactly what, but not resembling anything that I had yet seen. Guy was right when he said so to me at Douarnenez, and I have a mind to poke fun at myself when I think of the strange idea that I formed of it. Such as it is, it pleases me decidedly, does this Paris, now that I am accustomed to these houses so tall that they stifled me for the first few days; to these interminable streets all grey, letting one scarcely see—and very indistinctly—a miserable little bit of sky; to its crushers, its omnibuses I mean, that are ever advancing like machines menacing ordinary carriages and poor folks obliged to cross the street.

"Parenthetically, it is very amusing to be in a crusher! People are seated facing one another, are looking at one another, are examining one another, are making little remarks, are striving to fathom at the first glance the character of their neighbors, are imagining their history, etc. Unfortunately, I have been in one only once;

and yet, because I was with Guy, who noticed the desire that I had for it, and with Miss Ashton—Charlotte's and Madeleine's old governess, a very stiff and very solemn English woman, who adores them, speaks French most wretchedly, and is as indefatigable a walker as myself. As for Charlotte, as her Pierre is an inveterate trotter,

she is quite ready to trot after him!

"It was naturally in a carriage that I made my first trip through Paris; and the more that trip advanced, the more did I lose my bearings! This Paris was certainly interesting to me, since it was new to me, but it did not attract me; my sympathy for it was not at all awakened! It appeared to me as grey as the sky loaded with fog. dull, fine rain made the many, oh! how many! passers-by disappear under their umbrellas, and one could distinguish only large, or rather big, or little, or graceful, or different other shadows. But of figures there were none! The shops only caused me no disappointment. Far from it! When I penetrated into one of them, that of the Louvre, Madeleine explained to me, I was really seized with admiration of it. It seemed to me so beautiful and so immense! But there were so many people there that, as on the previous evening at the railway station, fright seized me lest I should lose myself or be smothered; and without reflecting, like a stupid little girl, I caught hold of Charlotte's dress and ventured along only by hanging on to it. As regards Madeleine, she was as much at ease as if she were moving around alone in those galleries. She advanced into the middle of that mob, ever calm, fine, elegant, without bumping against any one or being bumped against. For a second, on turning round, she perceived my hand ever holding Charlotte's skirt in a tight grasp, and she pouted slightly:

"'Arlette, do not play the child so! Do not clutch on to Charlotte! No one does that! It

is not proper!'

"It was the first time that I heard this last phrase fall from Madeleine's lips. Now I can no longer count the number of times that she has come and pounced down on my inexperience!

- "While my aunt and Charlotte were choosing in that shop—like to a city of merchandise—a quantity of things of every sort, I used all the power of my eyes in contemplating the buyers, in the first place, nearly all dressed as no one is at Douarnenez, leaving on their way a fine little perfume; in contemplating also the multitude of articles sold in that astonishing shop, articles so pretty that I would have liked to buy all of them!
- "And so when my aunt, after having chosen a stuff of adorable delicate grey, said to me: 'It is for you, Arlette. Since you are my daughter, for the moment, it is indeed as little as I can do to complete your trousseau!' I was so delighted that I embraced her warmly while exclaiming that she was a love of an aunt, not thinking that we were not alone.
- "A lady who was buying near us all at once assumed a mien of such astonishment that I became conscious of having borne myself like a young savage. On his part the salesman laughed

in his beard and cast discreet, but curious, glances at me. My aunt did not seem angry. In confusion I whispered to her:

"'Aunt, forgive me for making myself so

ridiculous!'

"She answered me in very lady-like fashion:

"'Little girls of your age are never ridiculous

when they show their pleasure.'

"'Only they would do better not to show it in public, would they not?' I said, in conclusion.

"My aunt burst out laughing:

"'Marvelous! Solomon himself would not

have spoken better.'

"And thereupon we reëntered the carriage to resume the series of journeys that at this moment completely absorb my aunt and Charlotte, thanks to the approaching marriage. They are so taken up with it as to weary those who, like myself, have no concern but to look at them doing it! Happily they do not seem at all exhausted, though my aunt repeats from time to time, in a tone of conviction: 'I can do no more!'

"But Guy assures me that this is a phrase used by every true Parisian woman, in which there is not an atom of truth. To make the rounds of the shops is a routine with Parisian

women, it seems.

"Following the day's programme, we went to a dressmaker's of high renown, who sold hats such as the inhabitants of Douarnenez, and even of Quimper, have no idea of; hats that very soon explained to me why, before I went out, Charlotte, who is cleverness personified, had brought about in the work of Madame Morgane's milliner an unexpected transformation to which it

owed an entirely new appearance.

"Before tall and innumerable mirrors ladies were seated, almost as elegant as the chief and the assistant milliners. These latter, under the eye of the grand mistress of the establishment, placed the hats on their heads. And then the ladies examined themselves to right, to left, in profile, with extreme attention. Never until then had I suspected that the choosing of a hat could be so important! One of them especially, and far from being the prettiest in the world, quite interested me, so serious was she in contemplating on her decidedly loose hair the different hats that the milliner put on her to try. The funniest thing is that her husband was with heras tall a young man as Guy;—he was as absorbed as she in the examination of Madame Caroline's masterpieces. I found him quite ridiculous in that fashion shop, in the midst of all those ladies, with his business-like countenance, as much so as if he had been entrusted with preventing the explosion of a bomb. But at the same time he amused me so, and I was so taken up with looking at him, that I did not hear my aunt calling to me after she had been speaking for a long time to Madame Caroline:

"'Arlette! Arlette!"

"Charlotte brought me back to reality by caressing me on the cheek with the violets fastened in her vest; and . . . oh! would that Madame Morgane had been present at that scene! . . . At this point my aunt made me too sit

down in front of a glass, and, behold! on my head Madame Caroline took upon herself the duty of making appear in succession a series of her masterpieces. She put them on me delicately, arranging, on this side and on that, the wild meshes of my hair, and then she drew back, turning her stout little womanish form, throwing back her head covered with red copper-colored hair, half shutting her eyes, and spreading her self in quite extraordinary phrases:

"'Yes, the design is harmonious and fine! A real Greuze, or rather a Récamier. A poem, madam, do you not think, is that hat over that face? Youth defying winter! It is a treat to have to cover a head of such original and piquant grace! We will make a marvel. I see it already. The bud is being born. The flower is going to bloom! She will please you certainly, madam.'

"And between these exclamations she was laughing with a satisfied laugh that made me think of the cackling of chickens when one throws grain to them. From among the number of those masterpieces she took one of such odd form and so plumed that I bounded, despite my confidence in Madame Caroline.

"'Oh! do not put such a hat on me as that! I would look like the educated dogs that one sometimes sees on the Pilgrimage day.'

"Madame Caroline took to cackling afresh. But her mien was a little less merry, and I guessed that my exclamation had been taken with very bad grace. With dignity she answered me:

"'You may rest at ease, miss. Never have our

customers the appearance of educated dogs. If it were otherwise we would not have a patronage so exceptionally numerous and distinguished.'

"A warmth mounted to my cheeks. But Madame Caroline did not appear to notice it, and, casting aside the hat that I had treated in such irreverent fashion, she placed on my head another that received general approbation, includ-But I took very good care not to ing my own. express it, fearing lest I might again articulate some stupid phrase. Indeed at that moment, noticing myself in a glass, I produced the impression on myself of another person, thus covered with an 'ideal' hat—to speak like Madame Caroline—and attired in the dress that my aunt had had made for me in advance, in accordance with your desire, dear father, and which I found on my arrival. I had the appearance of a real young lady; I seemed much taller than ordinarily, and my form also was quite different, much better! At last—I may acknowledge it in a whisper—I found myself quite genteel! I am sure that Madame Morgane and Blanche, seeing me thus transformed, would no longer have dared to make use of me as an illustration that little women are only mean defective creatures. Moreover, if they had so held, I would not have believed them! And especially would I not have wept, as I did of old, when a stupid little thing, at the idea that I was a defective creature.

"I left Madame Caroline's delighted, and I continued to be so in the carriage, when, all of a sudden, a shadow passed over my joy. My aunt,

after having celebrated, in company with Charlotte, Madame Caroline's talents, concluded thus jokingly:

"'The misfortune is that they are talents which come quite high. Ah! it is not a saving to get

one's daughter married!'

"Suddenly, father, I remembered that you had recommended me to be very, very saving, to spend as little as possible; and I was seized by the fear that it is quite necessary to spend much money in order to be dressed as I was going to be for Charlotte's wedding. I did not know how to ask my aunt to reassure me, and, in my embarrassment, I had become silent, quite against my custom; so much so that my aunt noticed it, and asked me smilingly:

"'What ails you, Arlette? Are you still afraid of having been head-dressed like an educated dog

by Madame Caroline?'

"'Oh! no. But . . . but . . . I was afraid of not having enough money to pay for

my pretty toilet!'

"That was not exactly what I thought, but truly the acknowledgment seemed to me too hard to articulate. And my aunt looked at me with eyes that I did not understand. They were very affectionate, but serious, and I asked right quickly:

"'Oh! aunt, you are not angry with me, are you? It is because papa has so recommended me to be saving, and I am asking myself how to

be so!

"'Well, we will teach you; be at ease, dear. I sincerely hope that your father will be satisfied

with you and with us on this point! Have confidence in me.'

"I did not ask better, and I breathed a sigh of relief on seeing my aunt so sure of her position. As we were in the carriage, sheltered from the looks of the curious, I embraced her with all my strength to thank her, and I could again be gay,

except when I thought of you, father.

"Certainly, it gave me pleasure on my own account to know that at Charlotte's wedding I would be quite Cinderella metamorphosed by her godmother; but that delighted me much more still on Guy's account, with whom I am to be collector. I was certain, in this way, not to be to him a subject of shame, as had been predicted to me by Madame Morgane, and by Blanche especially, who missed no opportunity to repeat to me that Guy, finding me so little after the Paris style, would not like to go around with me, etc. The most unfortunate thing is that, without acknowledging it, I had taken to believing him since I could compare myself with my cousins; it came at last to seem to me that Guy must surely judge me in that way.

"And so, as I was now pacified, I wanted him also to be so immediately. And during his appearance for a moment at the house, on the evening of that memorable afternoon, I announced to him that he would see a transformed Arlette at Charlotte's wedding, and would not have to blush for my country girl's costume, as Blanche

said.

"'Then, you will be very beautiful?'

"Modestly I replied:

"'I will be genteel. . . I hope .

"'And you are delighted at this prospect?'

"'Oh! yes!'

"That smile, the meaning of which I have not yet succeeded in fathoming, ran under his mustache:

"'There is an "oh! yes!" prompted by conviction. H'm, Mademoiselle Arlette. Has Paris already made its unfortunate influence felt in you? Is it making you coquettish?'

"'Oh! no, I was already so at Douarnenez.'

"'You were so? Really? How do you know it?'

"'Because Captain Malouzec told me so, precisely on the day when I declared to him that I was satisfied, as much so as one could be, at having learned that I was not a wretched abortion!'

"And effusively I concluded:

"'And it is you who have taught me so. And

so I will be forever grateful to you for it!'

"'You are a thousand times too good, my cousin. I do not deserve so much. From a spirit of justice I merely wanted to rectify some slightly erroneous opinions of Madame Morgane on this point. Do not take the trouble to speak to me of your gratitude, but rather do me the favor of telling me your first impressions of Paris.'

"I did not ask better. It is so amusing to babble! I told him everything, my opinion of the crushers, of the employees of the Louvre shop, of Madame Caroline and her products, of gentlemen who buy their wives' hats. I asked Guy whether, like me, he did not find them ridiculous in this personage. He answered

with a very decided 'certainly.'

"How well we understand ourselves with Guy! I would that he were my brother, my big brother; but all the same I would keep Corentin and Yves, whom I love so much!"

"NOVEMBER 14.

"Mademoiselle Catherine has come to bid me adieu. She sets out for home this evening. I embraced and reëmbraced her I do not know how many times, as if my kisses could leave on her countenance something of me that you would feel, dear father, when she will go to see you on my account.

"When the door closed behind her, I had a shuddering in my heart, feeling myself alone, quite alone this time, in Paris, entirely separated

from my Breton country.

"But this impression has not lasted. I can now no longer find myself lost in Paris as the first day. All here are exceedingly kind to me! And so, I love them! But not all in the same manner;—to my paper I can well entrust the real truth!—Madeleine continues to intimidate me much, in reality, with her unalterable wisdom and her equally unalterable calm. Because of Charlotte's marriage the whole house is in agitation, and I am like the house: Madeleine herself remains a real lake, without a breath of wind, without a wave. As during the rest of the year, I am sure, for hours she studies her piano with a patience that astonishes me; so often does she repeat the same passages! She

paints flowers, copying her model petal by petal, and she embroiders without relaxation on minute works, not seeming to have the least doubt in the world that treasures of attention are necessary to reach a satisfactory conclusion. She follows courses, as people say here, and for her own pleasure! for she has no more need at all of taking instructions. Such is my aunt's opinion, and

I, between ourselves, hold the same view.

"How much science there is in Madeleine's brain! When I think of it, I am penetrated with admiration for her—with one of those admirations that overwhelm you with the idea of your own unworthiness; and I understand how she very often finds (I suspect) that I say or do stupid things, that is to say 'incorrect' things, since she strives to conceal her impression from me. But I now know her face too well to permit myself to be mistaken! When a certain little fold appears between her eyebrows, I am sure that I have put on my conscience some little stupidity or other.

"And then my astonishments, my admirations, my antipathies to her I regard in general as somewhat ridiculous. She seems as if saying to me: 'What a child you are, then, Arlette!' Which falls on me like a rather cold wave and forces on me the resolve to keep all my ideas to myself. Only that it is a resolve which it would be impossible for me to keep! I am too much accustomed to letting them take wing as soon as seems good to them. Captain, how would you like to

get them together?

"With my aunt and Charlotte I am quite at

ease. Them at least I never scandalize! But they have something else to do besides listen to me babble. Moreover, Charlotte is always with Pierre, concerned with her Pierre when she is

not the prey of seamstresses, milliners, etc.

"Fortunately for me all alone I have Guy, my great friend. A great friend whom I hardly ever see at leisure, for example. Every day, no doubt, he comes to the house; but, except occasionally, on short visits—at least they seem so to me—and then he goes away I know not whither. I would like to know even what that 'whither' is. I have asked Charlotte about it—not Madeleine, bear in mind—and the only information I got was as follows with a smile that I did not understand:

"'I cannot tell you whither Guy is going. He entrusts me with no secrets. Ask him if you de-

sire to know.'

"'Will not that make him angry?'

""Oh! no!"

"That very day, as Guy had come for a moment before dinner, I served up my question to him quite warm. He seemed rather astonished thereat, so that I thought he also was going to answer me in Madeleine's famous phrase: 'It is not proper!' But he seemed pleased with me on that account, and, in that tone which never tells me whether he is speaking seriously or not, he repeated:

"'Where do I go when I leave you? Well, according to the hour, I dine in town, or I go to the theatre, or to the races, or to pay visits, etc.

In a word, I taste of all the charms of life!'

"'How happy you are, Guy! I also would like to taste of them as you do, for they must be delightful when you thus give all your time to them!'

"To my great surprise, he gave a most belittling shrug of the shoulders to the charms in question,

and answered me without jesting:

"'Rest quite assured that they do not deserve to be regretted by any person having even the shadow of reason. Ah! what a daughter of Eve

you are, little Arlette!'

"Thereupon he left, after having kissed the tips of his fingers to me. My ideas had not been enlightened a particle by his answers! I was a little put out at this, but not as much as I might have imagined. And, how odd! it is because I like to feel myself an ignorant little girl as compared with Guy, who has as much experience as a very old man. I see it in his eyes, I guess at it by what he says, and also by what he does not say! Sometimes, while chatting with my aunt, or again with his friend Pierre, he constructs a phrase that to me has a slight air of simplicity, and my aunt, or Pierre, bursts out laughing. As for me, I do not at all understand the cause of their sudden hilarity, and that provokes me. I have a desire to call to Guy: 'Since you are my friend, teach me how to understand all that the great personages are saying! I am no longer a "little one"! I am almost eighteen!'

"And yet I say nothing of the sort to him, not because Madeleine would perhaps whisper to me her eternal 'not proper!' but because it is agreeable to me to be to Guy a sort of baby of whom he is obliged to take care!"

"NOVEMBER 16.

"Beginning with yesterday, I am in love with Paris! To me it is no longer an immense assemblage of houses through which, here and there, are scattered some trees whose poor roots are crushed under the asphalt. I have understood that it had beauties of its own; I was quite in the wrong in not noticing them, because they were different from the beauties that I love above all—those that the good God has made and in which men count as nothing, like the sea, sunsets, flowers. . . .

"What has reconciled me with Paris is my visit a little while ago to Notre Dame; and I owe that visit to Guy. Yesterday, as he was questioning Madeleine on the programme for our rounds to-day, she answered him with a list of

trips that staggered him:

"" What! so many concerns for a single afternoon! But you are going to kill this poor little Arlette! And do you not reckon that she must be mortally weary from walking so incessantly from shop to shop."

"In that respect Guy was entirely mistaken! But I did not dream of protesting, when I heard

him continue:

"'It would be much better were she to visit a little of Paris. Louise, send her, then, "on a pilgrimage," under Miss Ashton's tutelage, if you have not the leisure to escort her.'

"'It would be very well, 'remarked my aunt,

'if Miss Ashton spoke French. But she stammers as much as if she had just landed from England. She and Arlette would not understand each other and would lose each other in Paris, were I to send them alone.'

"'But you might send them under my escort. Let us see, Arlette, will you come, you and your bodyguard, and visit Notre Dame, for example, since you are so fond of churches, accepting me

for a cavalier.'

"I received the proposition with delight. But my aunt, and I ask myself why, showed hesitation. She muttered some words to Guy, among which I caught on the wing Madeleine's dear 'proper.' At last Guy, fortunately, made his idea prevail, and to-day all three of us set out for Notre Dame, in a crusher, as I desired. I always much prefer crushers, in which one has air and light, to the hackneys, that are veritable little boxes on wheels in which one does not breathe.

"Oh! Notre Dame! How right Guy was in bringing me thither. In the first place, because of the flower market which adjoins it and as we passed it was giving out the scent of the lilacs and roses of the South; then because the church is itself of a beauty that completely overcame me. I was filled with respect, on penetrating into it, at the mere idea of the number of years whose weight it bears. It produced on me the effect of a very noble, very majestic, and very benevolent old lady who would at once inspire you with the desire of prostrating.

"Guy, who adores Notre Dame-on its own

account, — though being a Parisian, — declared that we ought to comport ourselves as tourists and see everything. And so we have seen everything, including the *treasure* and the towers!

"When we arrived at the top of one of the towers, after having crawled up step by step, I thought I had been carried straight into the heavens. On leaving the interminable stairways, I saw the blue, more blue, an infinite blue, delicate and soft, which was not veiled by a single cloud; and then a clearness of sunshine, limpid and transparent, with which I felt myself enveloped as by the winter wind that was biting our faces. Around us there was nothing but space full of light. And then at our feet, very low down and quite crushed looking, the mass of houses extending so far that they were confounded with the mist on the horizon. I was struck at seeing so many of them, at thinking also of the number of persons who were living under those innumerable roofs, glittering in the sun, persons whom I knew not, whom I would never know, some of whom were very happy and others, O God! unhappy, since it seems that there are many also of the latter.

"'What are you dreaming of, Arlette, with

that grave mien?' Guy questioned.

"'I was asking myself whether, in all those houses, there are *surely* more happy than unhappy people. There are more of the former, are there not?'

"'Let us hope so, indeed.'

"'You do not believe so, Guy? You speak without conviction.'

"'It is because in that you are agitating a big question, little queen, which has made whole schools of philosophers meditate, without having much light thrown on it. And as for me, who am not precisely a learned philosopher, I would not dare try to solve it. Let us hope together that the sum total of mortals satisfied with their lot is greater than the sum total of those who are not so; and thus we will bear ourselves as perfect optimists!'

"At that moment, by Guy's look and tone, I guessed that he was speaking from inspiration gained from his old man's experience, and I would have liked to be able to enter into his thoughts, to unravel what was going on in them. Our eyes met, and, changing tone, he concluded

pleasantly:

"'I suppose, moreover, that I am preaching to a convert. I have no need to recommend to you indulgence toward poor life, so often calumniated, even by those who owe most to it. Rest satisfied for a long time with picturing it to yourself as attractive as the palaces inhabited by your friends the fairies.'

"'Well, it is not at all such as I represent it to myself. To me it resembles one of my preferred paths, down there near Douarnenez, stretching along the sea. It is not beautiful throughout its whole length, is that favorite of mine; at certain places heather, broom, all sorts of pretty little plants are an escort to it; then, elsewhere they disappear; there remains but the thin and red grass in summer. But, without taking any concern of its surroundings, my path is ever

stretching out until it stops short in front of an enormous rent in the cliff. Then it is a void. That is the end.'

"I took such pleasure in speaking again of my dear path, the view from which out to sea has no parallel, that I forgot the place where I was, and I was almost astonished at hearing Guy's voice resound:

"'Little Arlette, you speak like a wise old man! But wise old men are fragile folk, do not forget it, and on this tower it is as cold as in Siberia; let us get down quickly, or you are going to catch cold.'

"As Guy's tone did not at all resemble that of Madame Morgane when she commands me to do even the least little thing, I obeyed him at once; and then began our visit to the church, a visit that interested me so much, especially when the declining day was making the cathedral more attractive, more collected as it were, so that night had almost come already when we at last emerged from it, ever faithfully followed by Miss Ashton. Paris was quite grey now, and as the street lamps were being lighted, it had the appearance of being filled with great yellow stars. Accordingly, as it so pleased me, I asked Guy to return on foot. He said to me:

"But it is too far! You will be exhausted on

getting home, and Louise will scold me.'

"I at once assured him and repeated that I had been in the habit of taking very long walks; that, during vacations, Yves, Corentin and I trotted around for hours, for we are all three of us indefatigable.

"'And you, little girl, are appropriately alert. I remember the rose-colored young person who was running up a cliff-road at Douarnenez. Come, let us walk, since it amuses you. You have done me the favor of accepting me as cavalier, I must obey you, must I not? If you have had more courage than strength, we will at any time indeed find some vehicle or other to pick us up.'

"And so all three of us set out, after having taken our farewell—I at least—of the cathedral, which seemed to me still more imposing, its tall stone outline enveloped in shadow. We at first followed the Seine, bespecked with red flames as fugitive as will-o'-the-wisps; fly-boats, Guy explained to me, as I confided my impression to

him.

"Thereupon he took to questioning me, not at all from curiosity, but with an interest that opened my heart as much as my lips, about my life at Douarnenez, about what I did, read, loved, etc. I was so satisfied to speak of my country that I began to babble as I do with the captain. From the manner in which Guy questioned and answered me, I was sure that I was not wearying him; but, from the sound of his voice I indeed guessed that while listening to me he had in his eyes that glimmer of curiosity and amusement that I am beginning to know, but which no longer puts me out of humor, now that he is my great friend. It was a perfect night, and so clear that I could point out to him the star which is my habitual confidant, that to which I tell my wild ideas, my desires, my hopes, when I am not

telling them to my other faithful friend, the sea. Those confidants, at least, ever listen to me, without answering me in the name of morality.

"'And you do not love morals?'

"'Oh! no! not any more than I would love a grumbling, severe, fault-finding old person who was ever throwing obstacles between me and the things that tempt me.'

"'Perhaps the forbidden things tempt you more

than the others?'

"'Yes, quite certainly! And so, what tempests have arisen between Madame Morgane and me! Especially when her forbiddings were unjust. But, to avoid being balked by her in my intentions, the boys and I always did in great haste what we had in our heads. After that it was seen . . .'

"'What was seen?'

"'How Madame Morgane's eyes shot lightning flashes, and she was heard fulminating a little against the boys and very much against my poor person, who received all sorts of names. One day she called me an "imp of satan." I did not know very clearly what this odd name might mean. I searched in my story and legend books, etc. I found no explanation. What does it mean?'

"'Nothing at all! It is an expression without either head or tail,' Guy vigorously replied.

"If Madame Morgane had heard!

"I was no better informed. As he asked me what had earned for me such an epithet, I told him of my escapade of old with Yves, whom I had lured away one evening into the garden to

see whether, as it struck midnight, fairies would emerge from the corollæ of all the flowers and would come and dance, in company with the hobgoblins, as I had read in a very pretty story. Yves was only scarce seven years old and was dying of fright. He hid his eyes under his fists, expecting the hobgoblins. As for me, my heart was beating with heavy thumps, but I was looking with all my eyes. Midnight struck. moon did not light up any of the apparitions that I expected. Neither sprites nor hobgoblins showed themselves. The flowers remained flowers. From that night I ceased believing in the truth of the marvelous beautiful legends. I was sorry, very sorry for it! And, in my discouragement at seeing that they were only lies, I pushed Yves, who did not budge, to make him return. But he had gone to sleep and, feeling himself touched, he thought that a hobgoblin wanted to carry him off. He began to utter such loud cries that the whole house was awakened by them and ran out. Madame Morgane, in her nightcap, called me 'an imp of Satan,' exclaiming that I wished her son's death, that I was a veritable sorceress, etc. Then, she maltreated me as she pleased, for papa was at Quimper and could not defend me. And no more did the hobgoblins come to my assistance. It is true that I no longer believed in them!

"Whence their right to abandon you, supposing even that they had existed. Little Arlette,

you speak very deep words.'

"Was he speaking seriously, or was he poking fun at me? We advanced a few steps in silence. Of what indeed could he be thinking? To oblige him to continue the conversation, I asked him, being in my turn desirous of hearing his narratives:

"'And, Guy, were you unbearable when you

were small?'

"'Indeed I was, I think, quite sufficiently, if I am to place any confidence in Louise's opinion."

"'Oh! Guy, tell me stories of "when you were small," stupid things that you did. It will be funny to hear you tell them now that you are wise!'

"Guy began to laugh.

"'I thank you, Arlette, for being at this point certain of my wisdom. I do not deserve so much honor. "Stories of when I was small?" But I do not recall any that are worth the trouble of being exhumed from the oblivion in which they sleep. I imagine that I was a lad like other lads.'

"'Not, I am certain, like Corentin and Yves! You must, in the first place, have formed plans for the time when you would be a man. Papa says that all boys do so, and he becomes impatient when Yves declares that it is all the same

to him to be anything at all.'

"'But, certainly, I had very lofty ambitions. In my early youth, because I had an extreme tenderness for horses, I thought of being an equerry in a circus. Then, about my seventeenth year, I believed myself a prodigy, a sort of great man, because a periodical of the twenty-fifth rank, at least, accepted some of my schoolboy elucubrations. Then a slight dose of wisdom

came to me with years, I humbly renounced literary glory, I confined myself to taking a hand at profane music, but lovingly, and to daubing in the same way. I buried together my ambitious dreams and my early illusions, and, not being able to hope for more, I resigned myself to being but a poor man of the world, that is to say, an elegant inutility, if not worse.

"Guy became suddenly silent. I was somewhat embarrassed by his tone, which had become ironical and almost sad; yes, sad! and bitter also! The idea flashed through my mind that he had just spoken much more for himself than for me. But, after a few seconds of silence, I again heard his voice, which had regained its customary sonorousness; and he said to me pleasantly:

"'Little Arlette, to what confidences are you not thus enticing me? Forget very speedily my fantastic opinions of myself, and come in and have a taste of pastry. Since you are a Parisian girl, you must assume Parisian habits.'

"Then we had some pastry. Miss Ashton and I, while crunching our cakes, indulged in smiles at each other, since we could hardly exchange words, not understanding each other. Guy acted as interpreter. On leaving the confectioner's, he offered me a big bouquet of violets of which he amiably volunteered to take charge, so that I could keep my hands in my muff, and I returned home delighted with my afternoon. My aunt said it was sheer folly to have returned on foot from Notre Dame—İ understand her fright, as she never walks!—that she would not again confide me to Guy, for he would soon kill me, etc.

I reassured her as best I could . . . and I earnestly hope, on the contrary, that she will send me again out walking under Guy's escort. It is so amusing, and we continue to understand each other so well, my great friend and I!"

"NOVEMBER 20.

"One, two, three days more, and on the fourth will take place the ball that my aunt is giving on account of Charlotte's marriage, and which will be the first of my life! And so I cannot help thinking of it every minute, while trying to imagine to myself that unknown pleasure which, for the moment, earns for me discreet exhortations to be calm on the part of Madeleine, who is detached from the vanities of this world—by reason of her scholarly characteristics, I suppose. As regards my aunt, it furnishes still more shopping trips for her. And yet, as she continues to be to me a true Cinderella's godmother, in the midst of her occupations, she thought of ordering a ball dress for me, without saying anything to me about it. Yes, dear father, you have well heard, a ball dress, a real one, for me, your Arlette! An exquisite dress! a vaporous dress! a dream!

"When I saw this dream enter the little parlor where we were, at the dressmaker's, I naturally thought that there still was question of some toilet for Charlotte, who spends her time trying on dresses these days.

"I said merely, with admiration:

"'What a pretty toilet! It is like a rose leaf.'

"'It pleases you? So much the better, . . . for it is you, dear, who are destined to be dressed in this rose leaf.'

"'I! truly, I?'

"That seemed to me impossible. Well, I was wrong. The delightful rosy cloud has become a skirt, delightful also, which gave me the appearance of a young lady, and no mistake! I looked at myself delighted, when my eyes were fastened on the bodice that the fitter fastened on me, and an exclamation escaped from me:

"'Oh! What a misfortune! A large piece is

missing from the body!'

"My aunt, Charlotte, Madeleine, the fitter, with common accord fixed their eyes on that body.

"'There is a piece missing? Where?'

"'Well, above. One sees all my shoulders, all

my arms! What is one going to do?'

"I was in despair. Instead of consolations, what did I hear? A general laugh, and Charlotte said to me, in the midst of that fit of extraordinary gayety:

"'Nothing at all will be done to your body. There is no piece missing in it. It is a low cut

dress . . . it is all right that way!'

"I was astonished and scandalized.

"'What! Will I have to go to the ball thus undressed? Madeleine, do you hear? Of a certainty, it is not proper to bear oneself in this way!'

"Madeleine, the wise Madeleine, laughed, so she did! And she was not of my opinion! And

this was all the answer she had for me:

"'It is the custom, Arlette. You have only to

be resigned. Everybody wears a low-necked dress at the ball!'

"'Then, it is proper, because it is the custom?

What a funny reason!'

"You will indeed be less warm in this way,' Charlotte whispered to me, by way of encouragement. 'Moreover, ask your friend Guy. He will tell you himself that all women are dressed in this way when going to the ball.'

"'Oh! Charlotte, you should rather say "thus

undressed"!"

"In spite of the repeated assurances of my aunt and of my learned cousins, I questioned Guy that very day, and he confirmed what they had said. There is nothing left for me now but to assume

my part boldly!

"My great friend arrived quite seasonably yesterday evening. At my entreaty Madeleine was in the act of teaching me how to waltz; but she did it in a manner so learned, obliging me to count so many steps, that I became quite mixed. My patience was taking wing, I was beginning to find the waltz a dance far too complicated for my ability, when Guy entered. Dear Guy! He saw me out of sorts and asked me why. I exclaimed vehemently that the waltz was a veritable puzzle-brain. He began to laugh and answered:

"'Come, you are going to learn without difficulty. Charlotte, play us something soul-stirring. And you, little queen, step out in time with the music.'

"I stepped out. And it was marvelous. Was I stupid when I found waltzing difficult?"

"NOVEMBER 24.

"Father, have you ever been to a ball? If so, why have you not told me that it was a delightful invention? How I now understand Cinderella and her tears when her wicked sisters left her at home to go there without her. Especially, as I understand how she forgot the hour and her godmother's recommendations, when she saw herself at the ball! Did you know, also, papa, that it is another delightful thing to whirl around for a long time, with one's eyes lost and one's head also, at the sound of an orchestra that is singing waltzing airs to you? Those who say that life is dull have never been to a ball, you may rest assured.

"Even the preparations for it were amusing. The whole apartment was in a state of bustle. There were carpet layers, florists, confectioners, etc. And all had conferences with my aunt, who was as full of business as a general must be on a day of battle. She was giving orders; she was everywhere, she was impatient or happy, according to circumstances, she was supervising the installation of the accessories of the cotillion—a dance still more charming than the others, for it lasts much longer, two or three hours! a dance during which one never ceases to receive presents from one's partner and to make them in return, and each time, by way of thanks, people waltz with each other.

"Charlotte was almost as agitated as my aunt; so that she was somewhat forgetful of her Pierre. Madeleine alone remained always the same, useful everywhere with her fairy coolness. And so

calm! saying to me from one side and another, with a mien of astonishment: 'How agitated you are, Arlette!' She spoke of it quite at her ease, did Madeleine: it was not her first ball! As for me, it seemed to me that the evening would never come! To keep myself engaged, I went, from time to time, to cast a glance at my rose-leaf dress, at my fragment of a body, at my very long gloves which, at least, went a little way toward covering my arms, at my satin slippers, rose-colored also, genuine loves of slippers!

"A little before dinner, as I found myself alone in the little parlor, I was unable to resist the temptation to dance a little, in order to see if I clearly remembered Guy's lessons. And I was whirling around at my best, quick, quick, quick,

when a voice called to me:

"'Very good, very good, miss. What an apt pupil! Thus to rehearse one's lesson!'

"I stopped short. It was Guy.

"'True, is it good? Will the young men indeed invite me?'

"'Yes, I think so!'

"'Do not think, I entreat you, be sure!'

"'I am sure that you will not lack for dancers."

"'You will bring all your friends to me, will you not? And you will not tell them that I took only a single lesson in dancing, otherwise they would be distrustful . . . they would shun me. And I desire so much to see the programme that Charlotte gave me filled up with names, and more names! I will bring it back such as it will be to Douarnenez, and Madame

Morgane will be able to see that in Paris people did not find me such an abortion. There!

"'There! Madame Morgane will be punished as she deserves and as Mademoiselle Arlette wishes. And, now, will you allow your great friend to write his name first on your programme? I will begin the precious series which will have for its affect henceforward to prevent the most terrible of stepmothers from calumniating you.'

"I exclaimed in delight:

"'Oh! yes, put down your name. Put it down as many times as possible. With you, at least, if I do or say things not proper, it is not too serious a matter.'

"'You are, then, saying things "not proper"!'
"'Madeleine finds it so. I notice it clearly!'

"'By no means. You are mistaken. Believe in your great friend. And remain yourself, es-

pecially!

"It was so kind of him to reassure me thus that I would have gladly sprung around his neck to thank him; but I did not do so, father, you may rest assured. I merely said to him:

"'You are excellent, Guy. During the cotillion, take your stand near me so as to point out.

to me what I must do.'

"'That is understood, if I can. But this evening I will not belong to myself. I will be a sort of master of the house, and I will have to concern myself with all the ladies present, so as to set a good example.'

"'I pity you, Guy,' I replied from the bottom

of my heart; 'it must be very wearisome to set a good example!'

"Here our conversation was interrupted by the

announcement that dinner was ready.

"Three hours later my dream was fulfilled: I was in my cloud dress, and I bore so little resemblance to the everyday Arlette that I did not grow weary of contemplating myself. Fortunately I was quite alone in my room, and I could well at my ease examine that little rosy person who seemed to me too pretty to be I at all.

"Suddenly Madeleine called me. It was time to go to the parlors, because the invited guests would soon begin to arrive. She was quite ready, was Madeleine, and so charming that I no longer thought of admiring myself, so much was I taken up with looking at her, as well as Charlotte and my aunt, as majestic as a queen. Guy came in just then; he took me all in with a glance, and as I know him to be a very severe critic, I asked him, seized with keen uneasiness:

"'Am I not all right?'

"'That is to say, you are a great deal too much all right for the peace of our dancers. Do not be coquettish, little Arlette. Have pity on them.'

"I did not very clearly understand what he meant, inasmuch as he turned around and whispered to my aunt something like: 'She is adorable thus. . . .' But I do not know whether it was of me that he was speaking, because, indeed, I cannot hope that I was 'adorable.'

"Some people had arrived already. My aunt, Charlotte and Pierre went and took their station at the entrance to the large parlor, and they began a frightful outlay of smiles, salutations, amiable words and hand-shakings. Each moment I saw the surging of ladies, gentlemen, young men, young ladies who were wearing half bodies like myself. There came so many of them that I asked myself where they would all be put. Well, all were housed. For example, chairs were disappearing more and more, even in the small parlor, where curious ladies succeeded one another to admire the treasures that Pierre is giving to Charlotte. The gentlemen were more discreet, and were crowded in the corners. To my taste, they were generally too small. Guy, indeed, was among the tall ones, the only ones that please me. He was so taken up with performing all sorts of acts of politeness that I was afraid he would forget to present the promised dancers to me. At that very moment the orchestra, which until then had played only random airs, began a All at once the whole collection of black coats put themselves in motion and directed themselves toward the collection of rosy, blue, mauve and green clouds that represented the young ladies. And toward me were they going to come? It was not noticed that I danced very poorly!

"Oh! Guy, dear Guy! He had not forgotten me. He came with a very genteel young man, who spoke to me the charming phrase which I

heard for the first time:

"'Will you, miss, do me the honor of granting me this waltz?'

"I had to restrain myself so as not to call to him: 'But that is all I ask!' I laid my hand on his arm quite correctly, as I saw all the other young ladies do, and we began to turn, turn! It

was amusing!

- "And so I very well remember this first dancer, a tall blond, quite smiling, but the others are all mixed up in my memory. When I wish to recall them, I see only black coats and, surmounting the coats, brown, blond, red heads, mustaches, beards, but I no longer know to whom they belong. I find that at a ball, still more than anywhere else, men resemble one another. And their conversations also! All invariably began by making the same remarks or putting the same questions. No doubt there is a mundane catechism which they learn at the moment when they make their entrance into the world and which they never forget. Not one of them failed to say to me at first:
- "'A very fine ball is that of this evening. And then, the temperature is very agreeable, thanks to the electricity. Have you gone out much this winter, miss?'

"To the first who put this question to me I

answered in lively strain:

"'Oh! no. It is the first time. And I would like to have many other balls still in prospect. It is so delightful to dance!'

"He said to me with a disabused air which I

found stupid:

"'It is unfortunately a pleasure of which you

will become over-sated.'

"'When I shall be old, perhaps, I do not say. But I am not in that vein . . . and it is only old ladies who can become over-sated.' "'Not only, alas!'

"Probably he was speaking for himself. However, he was no longer very young; he was at least thirty, scarcely any hair on his head and no freshness at all in his face. He seemed disposed to continue the conversation; but I preferred to

waltz. And we had begun to whirl again.

"I who had been afraid of running short of cavaliers! I had more than were needed, because, when they had danced once with me, they returned to ask me for another dance, or they brought their friends. In the intervals they remained to chat or led me to the buffet, the way to which they all knew very well. But I am afraid I said somewhat extraordinary things to them. They laughed as they listened to my impressions of Paris, of the world, and yet I strove to be as correct as Madeleine.

"To my taste the cotillion came too soon, for I knew that it would announce the end of the ball. All the time Charlotte was jumping from one end of the parlor to the other. Here and there she chose a young lady, made her perform all sorts of most graceful exercises, and the exercise was always concluded with waltz turns. I danced several times with Guy. He was the cavalier of a very pretty young lady, Jeanne d'Estève, whom I had already seen once on a visit to my aunt's, and who does not please me, I do not understand why, since I am always sympathetic to beautiful persons! And she has shoulders like to red marble; her movements are supple, almost caressing. But she has too much the air of a lady already. There are too many things in her eyes. And then she has a way of letting her look glide between her eyelids that displeased me still more when she made use of it in regard to Guy, who chatted a great deal with her. Fortunately I had not time to examine them.

"At last, after a triumphal march which all the dancers performed in the parlor in order to go and salute my aunt, majestically seated in her large armchair, the small supper-tables appeared. I was at that at which Guy sat. He asked me:

"'Are you satisfied with your evening?'

"I spoke a 'yes! yes!' with such conviction

that everybody around me started laughing.

"Was I satisfied! So much so that once in bed I strove not to let sleep take hold of me so as to begin over again the whole evening in my mind. And it was very easy, so clearly had I still in my eyes the images of the gentlemen and ladies whom I had found the best! I saw them going and coming, smiling on one another, speaking to one another while the orchestra was ever playing. But the music seemed to me more sweet and remote, and, likewise, the voices of the cavaliers and the dancing girls; their movements became uncertain, their outlines vague . . . vague . At last I saw nothing at all, nor heard anything. I had gone to sleep."

"NOVEMBER 27.

"How Madame Morgane would triumph if she knew that I behaved myself to-day as a person far from civilized! What makes light to me the memory of my adventure is that she will know nothing of it. Listen to the story, father. "The day after to-morrow, then, Charlotte's marriage takes place. And so my aunt, more and more full of business, had sent us, Madeleine, Miss Ashton and myself, to go on an errand in the Avenue de l'Opéra. When we left the shop, there was no carriage! No doubt the driver had misunderstood the orders. I was delighted at the mere prospect of returning on foot, but I took good care not to show all my satisfaction, because of Madeleine's unhappy mien, who replied to me in a tone of fright, when I insinuated the possibility of walking:

"Return on foot! It is entirely too far. We

will take any old hack.'

"I continued my insinuations, but in another

way.

"Ah! Madeleine, since you do not wish to walk, let us get into an omnibus. It will be much more pleasant than a hack!'

"'I do not know whether that would please mamma,' Madeleine remarked without enthusi-

asm.

"'Is it not proper to get into an omnibus?'

"'Oh! yes, but . . .'
"'I entreat you, Madeleine, do not look for a

"but . . ." Miss Ashton, will you?"

"Vaguely Miss Ashton made some sign or other, and Madeleine resignedly at last said to me:

"'Let us get into an omnibus, since that sort

of vehicle pleases you so much.'

"She herself took the numbers, and then the aristocratic Madeleine, like a simple mortal, waited until there were seats for us. Her bearing was still less charming when she found herself seated beside a stout gentleman, puffing after the manner of a sea-dog, and opposite to two very smart young men who all at once did us the honor, untimely as it was, of their attention.

"Suddenly to the platform mounted a spare, yellow, mean-looking woman, with a stout and ugly chub-faced boy in her arms, and she remained standing, swayed by all the motions of the omnibus. I thought that she was going to be very sick, thus loaded with her child, and I whispered in Madeleine's ear, who was ever dignified:

"'Is she not going to sit down?'

"'You see clearly that there is no more room."

"It was true. Many old ladies in the coach, and some gentlemen; one reading, another buried in his reflections, and the two young men ever absorbed in their contemplation, which was irritating Madeleine. I saw it by the deep rose color of her cheeks and by the revealing wrinkle of her eyebrows. No doubt they were very tired, since they did not offer their seats to the poor woman loaded with her baby! At that very moment a shock came near making her fall. It was too much! I did not reflect as to whether I was correct or not, but I arose and called to the woman:

"'Madam, will you take my seat?'

"I had not finished my phrase when three exclamations resounded: Madeleine hurriedly said to me: "'Arlette, you cannot be alone on the platform. Keep quiet.'

"Miss Ashton exclaimed:

"'Oh! Miss Arlette, don't budge! I go . . .'

"And the two handsome young men, as if a single man, called:

"Kindly accept my seat, miss."

"Certainly not, I did not want to accept it.

And I said to them without hesitation:

"'I thank you. But, since you are fatigued, I do not wish to oblige you to remain standing on my account!'

"One of them became almost crimson, the other green. The whole omnibus was looking.

An old lady murmured:

"'Very good, a good lesson that."

"Madeleine seemed so suffocated that I felt myself seized with great confusion when I perceived the woman installed beside her in my place, while I turned back to take that of Miss Ashton, so as to obey my cousin's peremptory order.

"The stout gentleman, during our goings and

comings, grumbled sullenly:

"'How restless, then, women are! One should not get into an omnibus when one is not capable of remaining there in peace.'

"My protégée turned around toward him, fu-

rious:

"'It is a pity to see people who are not oblig-

ing complain when others are so!'

"The whole omnibus felt a slight ringing of approbation that increased the stout gentleman's bad humor, and he began to dispute with the

woman, without listening to the conductor, who

wanted to make them keep silent.

"I was quite ashamed of being the cause of so much trouble. Fortunately we arrived in front of Saint-Philippe du Roule. Madeleine jumped out of the accursed crusher rather than got down from it. I followed her. I guessed clearly from her appearance that a sermon was in preparation in her brain for my benefit, and I bravely got ready to receive it. I have so often been thus favored by Madame Morgane that one more could not make me very much afraid! But she merely said to me in a tone revealing the state of her mind:

"'Never again, Arlette, will I go with you in an omnibus, since you do not know how to be-

have yourself in it!",

"'I do not know how to behave myself in it?"

"'No, you do not know how to behave yourself in it properly. You indulge yourself theatrically in it. You cause disputes.'

"'Then I should have let the woman stand,

loaded as she was with her child?'

"'Yes, as it could not have been otherwise. A young girl should never put herself in evidence!'

"'I did not think for a moment that I was ever going to do so!' I said, angry at being scolded because of the accursed proprieties. 'Do not fear; now I will not forget that in Paris one must think only of oneself!'

"In silence we went up our street. I do not know what Madeleine's reflections were, but mine were not pleasant. I thought that my aunt was going to find me very badly reared, to regret having me in Paris, that Guy would be dissatisfied, and perhaps would not care any longer to be my friend, regarding me as a stupid little creature, good to send back to Brittany. Indeed I had death in my soul when I reëntered the parlor, escorted by my two bodyguards, like a prisoner between two policemen. My aunt, Guy, Charlotte and Pierre were babbling by the fireside. On hearing us, they turned their heads, and Guy exclaimed:

"'Oh! My goodness! What has happened to

you? You look so lugubrious!'

"Madeleine was generously silent. Then, so as not to show myself a coward, I declared:

"'It is because I have done something stupid!'

"'What was it? Tell it to us!' all of them asked at once, with the mien of people who want to be amused.

"'Do not assume such an air of enchantment! In two minutes you will think as Madeleine does,

and you will scold me.'

"I began my story; but, as I proceeded, they laughed so heartily that their laughter gradually gained upon me. They were not angry at me, and, in the joy of being delivered from my fears, I asked Madeleine, throwing myself around her neck:

"'Madeleine, do not be dissatisfied with me. Now I will always leave women standing, even if they have children in their arms . . . as it ought to be so!'

"As her only answer she embraced me with

all her heart, and peace was restored."

"NOVEMBER 30.

"Charlotte is married! Charlotte left at once, after dinner. And now she is traveling alone with her husband. How much confidence she must have in him to go away so, without being afraid, leaving behind her all her people, and setting out even in the evening! Well, she did not at all seem as if frightened. On the contrary!

"What a pity that this day has passed even more quickly than the others! The forenoon rolled around at first with giddy rapidity, after an affecting scene at the little breakfast, because Charlotte remarked that it was her last meal as a young girl. Seeing my aunt very much moved, I leaned over to embrace her, but too quickly; I upset my cup of chocolate. That put us all in sorts again. Moreover, we did not have time to indulge in effusions; it was necessary to hurry so as to be ready for noon. Well, at the appointed hour, Charlotte was not so. Pierre was uneasy in front of the closed door, asking every moment:

"'May I enter?'

"And ever did my aunt pitilessly answer: 'No.'

"Then Pierre resumed his comings and goings, and was answering Guy, who exhorted him to be calm, with a funny smile under his mustache:

"'I would very much like to see you there! I am certain that you will not excel in patience."

"At last that famous door was opened; my aunt announced: 'Pierre, your wife!' And, into the parlor, filled with people and with flowers, Charlotte entered, like to an apparition in the

whiteness of her veil, her satin, her lace, her orange blossoms. But I was not able to admire her at my ease, for Guy came and said to me:

"'Let us leave, it is our turn; it is time."

"We got into our coupé, which I would have recognized by the very delicate faint odor of a cigar that was floating there and was mingled with the sweet perfume of my bouquet—which he had given to me. I found that bouquet so pretty that I could not contain myself about it, and I embraced it with all my lips, while merely pretending to scent it. But Guy remarks everything, and he smilingly said to me without making fun of me:

"" Why do you embrace your flowers?"

"'To thank them for being so beautiful! I would like to plunge my whole face into the midst of them, as I indeed wholly slid into the poor captain's baskets of heliotrope when I was a very little girl. It was such a pleasure to me that I ceased to take advantage of it only when I understood that in this way I was doing injury to my dear flowers!'

""Which is quite worthy of you, little queen. Let us get out quickly, we are at our destina-

tion!'

"Many members of the family were there al-

ready, and also officers, friends of Pierre's.

"At last, after a few minutes, it was Charlotte's turn to arrive. She ascended the church steps on the arm of an old gentleman bedizened with decorations, an uncle of importance. She entered the church, all of us following her, like a flock; but a flock worth the trouble of being

contemplated, if I am to judge by the number of eyes that kept watching us, as we advanced, to the music of a triumphal march, toward the

altar glittering and flowery as a repository.

"The ceremony began. At the slightest motion on the part of Charlotte, the beadle and my aunt hurried to arrange her veil. My aunt's countenance no longer wore its wonted smile, but bore a new expression, quite grave, and at times she tapped her handkerchief very quickly on her eyes. If Charlotte had not continued to appear radiant, I would have come to believe that marriage is a terrible adventure. The bishop who gave the blessing seemed to say that it is not always a pleasant thing. Fortunately, since I remember how Madame Morgane has taken me in on this point, I do not refer any more on this question to the opinion of mature or even old persons! I think, with Charlotte, that it is charming to have always with you some one who adores you, who finds perfect everything you say or do—Pierre is so with Charlotte—with whom you chat, walk, have music, dance, etc.

"It is too bad, and it has left a heavy weight

"It is too bad, and it has left a heavy weight on my conscience, but Monseigneur Deronis' sermon plunged me into all sorts of very profane reflections. And then those flowers, those toilets, that multitude kept me from feeling clearly that I was in a church, and my mind was trotting, or rather galloping, in I know not what land of enchantment. I thought that, when I would be married, I would no longer be scolded, I could do whatever I wished. Papa, my dear papa, would be always with me. We would

leave Madame Morgane wherever she saw fit to stay, provided it was not in very close neighborhood to us. And we would be quite happy with Yves and Corentin. I already saw a handsome young man—after the manner of Guy—coming to tell me that he would be delighted to have me as his wife. He was speaking to me. I was going through the ceremonies as a matter of form. It was charming!

"Some one came and stood in front of me. It was not a handsome young man, but indeed the beadle, who appeared on the other side of my kneeling chair, making a grand salute to me.

"I murmured to Guy:

""What does he want me to do?"

"'He wants you to take up the collection un-

der my escort.'

"My heart began to beat at the idea that I would have to move around, without being in the least awkward, under all those knowing and curious looks. Guy, never suspecting my sudden anxiety, added with an imperceptible smile under his mustache:

"'On your way do not look too intently on the pretty Christian girls assembled in this church, otherwise you will forget that you are collecting . . . and God knows what will become of your purse and its contents!'

"I whispered to him in my turn:

"'Oh! Guy, I will pay very close attention. But how much afraid I am that I will do something awkward!'

"Have no fear. Everything will go all

right.'

"His assurance restored my courage. The beadle was waiting for me, discreetly impatient at my not moving. I saw Madeleine's sky-tinted dress undulating already, and in my turn I set

out on my route, my hand in Guy's.

"Well, our collection took place with a correctness that would have put Madeleine in a transport of delight. From under her veil Charlotte smiled at me; but Pierre gave me his offering without changing his air of penetration. The attendants were far from wearing the same serious mien; even the ladies did not appear as if praying much for the newly married couple. Perhaps, after all, they were doing it in their hearts, quite interiorly. I recognized several of my dancers at the ball. As I went around they addressed to me rather discreet salutations, and I heard one of them say in an undertone to Guy:

"'My compliments, old boy.'

"Compliments for what? But it was not Guy

who was getting married.

"In the sacristy they began again with more pronounced salutations, while marching in with the host of my aunt's and Pierre's friends, both of whom, as well as Charlotte, were brimming over with smiles, and Madeleine on her part did likewise. Guy, standing near me as I was affected by the contagion, displayed like generosity; and that generosity was even particularly manifested in regard to Jeanne d'Estève, whom I like less and less, decidedly, while admiring her for her hair—a veritable golden snow—her ivory-colored complexion, her very red lips, her at the same time rounded and spare figure, her

knowledge of the world, which Madeleine would be delighted to see me possess! At luncheon she was very wearisome: she monopolized Guy, she had him serve her, she babbled with him and

smiled at him with her pretty teeth.

"At last, fortunately, as gradually the guests were paying their respects to my aunt, she was indeed obliged to take part in the general movement. We found ourselves again intimate, when suddenly Charlotte, who had disappeared in a moment, returned; but she was no longer in white; she had on her traveling costume, her hat, even her veil. Nor was Pierre any longer in full dress. On seeing them, behold! the wise Madeleine suddenly burst out sobbing. I looked uneasily at my aunt, and it seemed to me that she was quite ready to do like Madeleine.

"' Madeleine, my little sister, I entreat you, do

not grieve so,' Charlotte repeated.

"And she embraced Madeleine, she embraced my aunt, she embraced me also, recommending both of them to me; Pierre seemed as if he did not know what to do with himself in the presence of this desolation. It was a scene much more affecting than that of the morning, even during the sermon!

"In the midst of it all Guy interposed. He suspected nothing and came to announce that the carriage was in waiting; it was time to leave so as not to miss the train. Pierre's countenance brightened up at this news. He spoke a 'Come,

Charlotte!' that was quite pleasing.

"My aunt repeated: 'Come, Charlotte!' in a

tone of resignation. There was yet a moment of bustling, effusions, adieus, tears; and when that moment had passed, Charlotte had left. We were all looking at one another, astonished at finding ourselves without her, standing face to face with one another, with the sensation that something was over."

"DECEMBER 5.

"Between ourselves, I had always thought that after Charlotte's marriage I would make the return journey to Douarnenez. But no one here seems to think of anything of the sort. And neither do you, papa, . . . you do not seem to expect your 'little one.' Why? Is it because you do not miss her at all? or rather are you treating her as an ingrate, because she is pleased in Paris when you are not there?

"Dear father, your Arlette's heart is entirely yours. You know it well, do you not? Only it is to her so delightful and so new to be spoiled by others besides you, the captain, or Mademoiselle Catherine, and it is so amusing to lead a life quite full of surprises, to learn thus a heap of things, noticed on the four corners of the hori-

zon!

"Since my arrival in Paris I am doing a wonderful amount of looking. All these lookings are then metamorphosed into ideas which, together, pretend to install themselves in my mind, where I ask nothing better than to welcome them. They precipitate themselves there, press upon one another there, some making only a passing visit—and those merit no attention—others choosing their domicile there—either discreetly

or as sovereign mistresses, sure of their importance. Of those, father, we will both of us talk, when your Arlette will be again nestling at your feet, listening to your dear voice. Even when I but think of that moment, my heart leaps with joy!

"Only, when I see you again, I shall also see Madame Morgane. H'm! H'm! For the moment I am trying to forget her existence as far as possible, for, as soon as I think of her, I have the impression that a shower of reproaches is going

to fall on me.

"If you were here, father, your child would be in a state of perfect bliss. But afar from you, it cannot be so, even with your letters. Do you not also to some extent regret your little Arlette, who adores you?"

"DECEMBER 9.

"I know now why there is no question of my return to Douarnenez. It is for a reason that has brought a great shudder of uneasiness into my heart. On one occasion, as I was speaking precisely of this return, I do not know in what connection, my aunt asked me:

"'Are you already weary of us?'

"I answered with a most sincere, 'Oh! no!'

"'Then you wish to remain with us longer, to spend the winter with us?'

"'But papa! I cannot leave him alone so

long. Oh! why is he not here?'

"My aunt did not answer all at once. One might have said that she was reflecting. At last she continued:

"'You had a letter from him this morning.

Did he call you back?'

"'No; he tells me, on the contrary, that I must not be annoyed on his account, for he bears our separation very well, being quite taken up with the many patients he has to visit.'

"'That's what he wrote to me. There is at present a good deal of malignant fever among the fishermen, a sort of epidemic. And so he desires that you do not return at once to Douarnenez.'

"I felt that I was becoming quite pale.

"'Oh! aunt, if he should contract that fever! How can he think that I will remain at ease here sheltered from that malady to which I know him to be exposed? And that when Madame Morgane and Blanche are with him!'

"'They are at Chateaulin. He no doubt

made them go there from prudence.'

"I murmured a 'My God!' into which I threw all my uneasiness; sobs rose into my throat. My aunt noticed this; she drew me upon her knees and began to reassure me most tenderly, giving me so many good reasons to calm my anxiety that I at last became a little pacified. Guy, in his turn, when he came in the evening, succeeded in putting a little balm on my anxiety by assuring me that the Douarnenez epidemic was not very serious, and as he has never deceived me, I believed him.

"What a delightful thing it is thus to have a great friend who understands you always, is ever ready to listen to you! Sometimes the fear suddenly seizes me that I am wearying him by babbling thus with him! But he quickly requires

me to continue, reminding me that, on the evening of my arrival, I promised that I would take him as my confidant and that he has not ceased to merit that confidence. Then I start out again as best I can. I tell him pell-mell all my ideas regarding Paris, and the people whom I see, without my being disturbed now when there appears in his eyes that flame which at Douarnenez made me think that he was jesting with me. When I find, moreover, that he looks too much as if he thought he was at the theatre while listening to me, I am sorry, but not too much so! We dispute a bit, and then we sign the treaty!

"It was fortunate for me! For it is to him that I have recourse when I am embarrassed as to what I ought to do, when I am afraid of committing one of those deeds of stupidity that act on Madeleine's eyebrows, when she is in despair at seeing me profit so little by her lessons on the ways of the world. He never scolds me; and, as soon as I turn my eyes toward him with 'my prayerful mien,' as he says, he comes at once to my aid. He merely asks me: 'What is the matter?' I explain my affair to him, and everything is fixed up all right. Madeleine's fine eyebrows have no evolution to perform.

"Of a certainty, I amuse myself a great deal in the world, but the best evenings yet are those that from time to time we spend at home, Guy and I giving music. He loves it as much as I do, and he does it excellently, though he treats his amateur talent disdainfully. But Madeleine, who is aware of her accomplishments, has told me that he plays the violin like an artist and that he

is a genuine musician. When we are both of us at the piano, I singing and he accompanying me, the minutes may pass as they will; I do not think of their duration, any more than of Madeleine's existence, who, patient as Penelope herself, is embroidering by the light of the lamp. Not only do I rehearse all my Breton songs, but even certain others that I have learned since coming here, especially the 'Silver Ring,' which Guy and I love, the one as much as the other. He does not sing, or at least he pretends he sings too poorly to gain a hearing. I only half believe him; he said he was a pitiful performer, and when he plays it seems as if the piano becomes a living person in emotion, sings, rejoices, or weeps and even sobs. Then, while I am listening, shutting my eyes so that this harmony may remain fixed in me, my whole Douarnenez appears to me in the little corner of my heart, where lives what I love most. And it is delightful, and a little sad also, because then, father, I feel our separation much more."

"DECEMBER 15.

"Decidedly I do not love the Masses of Paris, or at least that which we attend. It is all very fine for me to do my best to keep my eyes always on my book or toward the altar, for I do not succeed in preventing them from casting glances on all sides—Guy pretends that I am going to use them up in Paris!—and then I have a heap of remorse!

"We always attend the eleven o'clock Mass. Before his marriage Pierre came regularly to join us at it. Guy comes also. But I have not a very clear knowledge of when he arrives, as he does not come near us.

"I suppose Pierre is offering up lots of prayers for his Charlotte. But of what is my cousin

Guy thinking?

"I am afraid that he is not pious at all. My aunt had so declared distinctly at the Kergoat Pilgrimage. Except that he neither smiles nor talks, he carries in church all his parlor air, and, like nearly all the gentlemen whom I see at this Mass, he has no book. They all seem to be there simply to escort the very elegant ladies who come, decked out, frizzed, dressed as if to pay visits. They behave very correctly, they sit down, they stand up when the occasion requires. And yet!

"I was thinking again of that this morning, on leaving church after Mass, after having made a multitude of salutations; everybody knows everybody else at this Mass! We were going up the Rue de Courcelles on foot, Guy and I away ahead, for we trot along much more quickly than my aunt and Madeleine. I was buried in my reflections; he noticed this, and

said to me:

"'How silent you are, little Arlette! What ails you, then?'

"Before being able to recall myself, I had al-

ready exclaimed:

"'Guy, why do you come to Mass?'
"'Why do I go there? What? Is it a good Christian girl like you who asks me such a question?'

"'Then, you do not come merely to join us?

Ah! so much the better!'

"'Decidedly, little Arlette, you have a sorry opinion of my religious feelings. Already at Kergoat you showed me this. Do you know that I am far from flattered at finding myself so severely judged? And why? May I ask you?'

"I have told him all the ideas that were trotting around in my brain on this subject. He listened to me without answering, but very attentively, showing not the slightest trace of jesting; I merely heard him murmur as he bit his

mustache:

"'Who would have imagined so much perspi-

cacity in a young girl's brain?'

"Then, ever without jesting, I am sure, with that smile which I love so much to see on him,

he concluded out aloud:

"'Well, Arlette, since you are persuaded that I stand very much in need of being converted, do me from time to time the charity of a little prayer, and, thanks to you, I will perhaps become a little less of a miscreant. Is it asking too much?'

"'Oh! no!' I said so ardently that he started

to laugh heartily this time.

"'Would not one think that he was listening to Monica and Augustine! And so, thanks to you, little Arlette, here I am perhaps on the way

to becoming a saint.'

"'Oh! Guy, do not become a saint all at once. The saints do not dance, and, when among people, I would rather dance with you than with any one else!'

"Be at ease, you frivolous young girl, for the hour of my complete conversion, no doubt, has

not yet struck.'

"Thereupon we bade adieu to each other. We had unfortunately reached home. Guy left us for the whole afternoon, for he was going to his dear concert at the Conservatory."

"DECEMBER 16.

"Well, we also went to the Conservatory, and I spent there one of those afternoons that one does not forget! After breakfast, my aunt having to write to Charlotte, who is still at Florence, in all her glory, with her Pierre, offered to Madeleine and me to attend that blissful concert under Miss Ashton's very respectable protection. And on the stroke of two o'clock we rushed to our seats, to Guy's great astonishment. Madeleine bore herself like a love. She made me sit down beside him, so, she declared, that I could at my ease confide my musical impressions to him. And I did not fail to do so.

"One thing made me astonished at him at first, and that was that in music he followed Grieg's concerto, when played by the orchestra, instead of listening to it only! It would have spoiled my pleasure to think even that those delightful sounds issued from all those little black marks. I said so to him. He laughed a little

and replied:

"'How well you are fitted to have wings, Ar-lette!'

"But he had not yet opened his score when came the turn of Wagner's opera; and I am not

astonished at it. The singer had a voice so beautiful that one could think of nothing else than

listening to her with all one's soul.

"When the orchestra and the singing had stopped, there was in the hall a veritable explosion of enthusiasm; and it would seem that this was a rather rare occurrence at the Conservatory, which is frequented only by persons who know how to admire on the inside. As for me, I did not think of applauding, so far was I yet from having returned from the exquisite world into which that music had transported me. I merely murmured, while my heart beat with emotion:

"'Oh! Guy, how beautiful it was!'

- "He answered: 'Yes!' and I saw by his eyes that he felt as I did. Then, filled with humility, I added:
- "'Why should you ask me to sing, you who are accustomed to hear artistes like her? Now I see clearly that there is nothing left for me but to be silent.'

"But he stopped me all at once:

"'Do not speak ill of your singing, Arlette. It also has a soul, and that is why I feel on hearing it the same joy as in listening to that singer.'

"My cheeks became red with pleasure, for Guy spoke without the slightest affectation, having no intention of paying me a compliment. Then I

no longer envied the singer.

"This afternoon passed a thousand times too quickly. When Madeleine said to me: 'Well, Arlette, it is over; are you coming?' I could

not refrain from saying: 'Already!' which did

not half express all the regret I felt.

"In the vestibule a multitude of persons were going out, were saluting each other, were smiling at each other, were lavish in exclamations on the excellence of the concert, which I was not the only one to find superb. Suddenly I perceived Jeanne d'Estève chattering beside her mother, strange to say—and with gentlemen, naturally! I felt a slight shock in my heart at this idea: 'Guy is going to leave you for her!'

"Just then Madeleine remarked her presence

out aloud.

"And to my great surprise, yet less great than my pleasure, Guy replied without ceremony:

"Let us go before she sees us. I am afraid

of her reflections on to-day's concert.'

"'Why?' I asked in astonishment.

"'She is profane in music . . . and I am as much afraid of false criticisms as of discordant notes.'

"'If she does not love music, why does she

come to the Conservatory?'

"'Bah! what will not women do, for effect?'

"Guy was joking, most certainly, for otherwise" he would not have spoken of the beautiful Jeanne with such freedom. But one thing certain is that he did not go near her; he remained with us. I would have liked very well to return on foot by his side, as on the day of our walk to Notre Dame; but with Madeleine, that must not be thought of, and I had to be satisfied with being put in a carriage by him."

"DECEMBER 23.

"I must write down every word of it in order to believe it! We were really angry with each other, were Guy and I. And because I wanted to put a wise resolve into practice! And so, now, I will be firmly distrustful of good advice and wise resolutions.

"Madeleine, though very learned, is ever possessed of the passion for lecture courses; and accordingly she went to-day to hear a sort of conference on 'Woman's Rôle in Our Time.' She brought me along, in accordance with my pressing entreaty, at the same time saying that I would get weary of it—which was an out-and-out rash judgment. On the contrary, I felt myself penetrated with the gravity of our mission, purely as women, while listening to what was said by the professor, a stout blond with penetrating eyes behind eyeglasses, who evolved an incredible abundance of ideas from his brain. He made me think of those sleight-of-hand fellows who make a profusion of flowers, coins, etc., emerge from a mere silk handkerchief. In short, that astonishing man closed his discourse with a very fine phrase exhorting us to develop our mind by reading much and seriously. Had I thought that that phrase would be the cause of my misfortune!

"I came home quite full of good resolutions, and as, just before dinner, I found myself alone in the little parlor, I spied on the table a brand new book—a book by a great writer! I thought at once of the professor's recommendation and said to myself: 'Now is the moment or never

to cultivate my mind!' At once I installed myself near the lamp and opened the book. But I had not read half a page, and that far from clear, moreover—there was question of a very beautiful and very nervous lady who was going to revisit a friend, I know not where—when a voice made me start up with my nose in the air. Guy was in front of me:

"What! all alone, Arlette? What are you

doing there?'

"'Only reading!'
"'What, then?"

"I reached him the volume. He cast a glance on it. But see how his face changed. It became quite angry looking, and, instead of handing me back the book, he threw it to the other end of the room, saying to me in a voice that I never heard him use before:

"'Who allowed you to touch this romance?'

"'No one. It was there on the table. I picked it up."

"In the same tone, almost severe, he con-

tinued:

"'Why do you so pick up books that are not yours?'

"I was again startled. His whole manner

puzzled me and made me angry.

"'You may rest assured that I would not have kept it if I knew it was yours. I am honest!'

"'I have no doubt of it. I only say that there are limits to curiosity, and that you have passed beyond those limits. It is not conscientious thus to open books without permission.'

"He spoke to me in a tone so severe that a

slight fog of tears mounted to my eyes. To be scolded when I had done nothing wrong was too much! And scolded by Guy! And so, very angry in my turn, I exclaimed:

"'It was not from curiosity that I opened that book, even the title of which I did not know half an hour ago; it was to obey Madeleine's

professor.'

"'Professor?'

"'Yes. He recommended us to read much in order to develop our mind. That is what I was going to do, thinking that my aunt's books were serious, naturally. And I did not think that I would thereby deserve to be spurned as if by

Madame Morgane!'

"My voice trembled, and sobs were coming quickly, very quickly, to my throat. I turned around abruptly to conceal this from Guy, but it was too late, and both my hands found themselves imprisoned in his. He was no longer irritated, but, on the contrary, somewhat uneasy.

"'Arlette, have I really hurt you so?'

"But I was still put out with him and I pulled

my hands loose:

"'Let me alone. You have been unjust! Now that you have been informed, give me back my book."

"'That is impossible, Arlette; that romance was not written for young girls, and ought not to be in your hands.'

"I began to understand.

"'Because it is not proper, is it not? Always the same story! Your Paris is decidedly filled with things far from proper—plays, books, etc.

Never at Douarnenez would I have imagined that there were so many of them! But I regret exceedingly that you arrived before I had been able to take a peep in your book at what those famous things are that are so amusing to mature persons!'

"'Where did you learn that they amuse

them?'

"'I notice it clearly by their mien. And it is exasperating never to be able to understand certain of their smiles, their glances and their reflections!'

"I was speaking right straight in front of me, but with the dull impression that I was saying stupid things. Guy was examining me, standing in front of the fireplace, his brows knit and twirling his mustache.

"'Ah! that's it; please tell me what madness

is seizing you?'

"'It is not a madness. I am not beside myself! I wish only to be instructed so that my ignorance may no longer make people smile!'

"'Are you not also desirous of knowing the history of all the crimes that are committed in the world, the list of all the maladies, of all the miseries that afflict poor humanity?'

"'I have no desire for that at all. Why do

you speak of them to me?'

"Because you seem to thirst with the desire of learning truths that are far from enjoyable. You and your sisters in curiosity are little monsters of ingratitude. One strives to dissemble to you the saddest phases of human life, so that the world may not seem to you a robbers' den, and

instead of being grateful for this, you have no more cherished desire than to render useless the good intentions with which one is animated in your regard!'

"'I do not ask to know everything,' I remarked, somewhat confused and filled with re-

morse for my words.

"'It is yet fortunate!'

"'But I would like to be as well informed as the young ladies of Paris. Do you think I do not notice that they are all laughing at my simplicity, that I do not see that Mademoiselle d'Estève is making fun of me from the eminence of her knowledge!'

"'Well, so much the worse for her and for those who resemble her! I say it to you in all sincerity, Arlette, you do not have to envy the

opinion that we men have of them.'

"'Oh! Guy, is that opinion bad?'

"'It is not at least, I suppose, that with which they intend to inspire us, and, I swear to you, it is not especially that which we would like people to have of our sisters. Remain yourself, Arlette. You would lose too much in changing to resemble the others.'

"He smiled a little and concluded:

"'Do not transform yourself, otherwise your father would no longer recognize his little Breton flower when he will see her again, and he would have a grudge against us on that account.'

"'True, Guy, quite true, you do not desire that I become like the young ladies of Paris, like

Mademoiselle d'Estève?'

"'I have but one desire, which is that you re-

main as long as possible the little Arlette who ran up the cliff paths, who came to us one evening, from her Brittany, quite frozen, quite curious, quite startled, and who indeed condescended to allow me to become her great friend.'

"He stopped for a moment. He looked as if reflecting, then he said to me with a kindly

smile:

"'Do you not wish now that peace be restored between us? Will you still refuse to let me take

your hand?'

"As my only answer, filled with remorse, I extended both my hands to him and I murmured, being somewhat afraid of what he might say:

"Guy, I was bad, but I promise you that I

will not be curious again.'

"'Agreed. For your own good, little Arlette,

I accept the promise.'

"And so the storm was at last dissipated. Fortunately."

"JANUARY 1, 189-.

"Is it possible, father, that I have been able to begin the year afar from you, without repeating to you all that I wish in your regard, without receiving the kisses which say to your little one that you love her as much as she loves you, that is to say, with all that is best in her heart! Oh! Why are you not here! You near her, and then Yves, Corentin, Mademoiselle Catherine, the captain, she would have nothing more to wish for!

"Our separation was my first thought this morning, and all at once I felt myself frightfully

sad! I saw you alone down there in our home, thinking of your Arlette whom you must miss a little, although you pitilessly keep her afar from you. Then, as if whispering, I took to murmuring to you the tender feelings with which my heart is filled for you, as if you were listening to me. And I had such an ardent desire for you to feel how close in thought I was to you, that I foolishly pictured to myself that that desire was going away to you and was good for you to receive. And I so often reread your letter, which reached me this morning, that its paper is almost torn.

"All have spoiled me here! Not only my aunt, Charlotte and Madeleine, but even Guy, who has sent me the same New Year's presents as to Madeleine, besides flowers and bonbons. I thanked him effusively; but I could not be gay as usual. All my thoughts were at Douarnenez.

"And then, to see my aunt and Charlotte, who returned the day before yesterday, so happy near each other, made me too envious! I was so much outside of Paris that I was not surprised when Guy said to me, in that very sweet voice which he has when speaking a little low:

"'Little Arlette, you are in Brittany, are you

not?

"'Yes, oh! Guy. Why am I not so for good? Since Madame Morgane and Blanche are always at Chateaulin, father must find himself very lonely. Because of that unfortunate epidemic, he would not allow the boys to remain with him at Douarnenez, and this New Year's day will be so sad to him!'

"'Well, do you know what must be done? Send him a word of reminder!'

"'How that?"

"'Why, by telegram. I am sure that it will give him much pleasure!'

"I jumped at this thought, and Guy added:

"'Scribble off your message. I will forward it immediately after coming out from Mass.'

"'Are you coming there with us?'

"He began to laugh.

"'On this first day of the year, what does not a man do who has a keen sense of the seriousness of life?'

"In honor of the new year, perhaps also, he went himself to forward my telegram. And so what a prayer I offered up for him at the Mass while he was by my side, at the end of our row! I told him so on leaving the church, for I knew not how to thank him for having conceived that dispatch idea. His eyes assumed that singular expression which I love without being able to understand it; but he answered me in his usual jocular tone:

"'You are the best little friend, Arlette, that

one could dream of."

"JANUARY 9.

"One thing still astonishes me very much since I have been here, and that is to see how many men there are in Paris who do nothing, that is to say, who have the air of having no other occupation but paying visits, going to the races, to the parks, etc. Never do they seem to work. And Guy, unfortunately, appears to me to be one of

them. Then I no longer know myself in that regard. So often have I heard papa repeat to Yves and Corentin that it is a strict duty for a man to work, that those who do not perform this duty are despicable beings and judged as such by all people with a heart! Certainly papa has set Yves and Corentin the example! He is always occupied, so much so that I have scarcely time to see him. He knows how to forget himself for others, to devote all his time to no matter what wretch calls him, without paying any attention to Madame Morgane's scoldings, she ever ready to repeat that he ought to choose his patients and finding it foolish to attend people who never pay.

"Is it possible that Guy lives for his pleasure solely, that he is of the number of those useless creatures whom papa judges so disdainfully? To be reassured, I say to myself that perhaps he has occupations that I am not aware of, I an ignorant little girl. I might ask Madeleine so as to make my mind easy, but I dare not. She would no doubt consider my question ridiculous, and answer it with one of those little smiles that

make me desire to sink into the earth.

"When anything engages my attention, I do not know how to conceal it, especially from Guy. This time I would have liked very much if he could not read my thoughts so quickly, but he did so as is his wont, and now I do not regret it!

"He dined that day at home, as he was to accompany my aunt to the theatre. Madeleine and I remained at home because, be it well under-

stood, the play was not one for young girls. My aunt had gone to finish dressing; Madeleine was looking in her room for pieces of silk for her eternal work; I was sitting in a corner of the room, and, while looking at the fire, I was thinking.

"Guy, having finished smoking, came to me;

he looked at me for a second and then asked:

"'What were you dreaming of with so grave

a mien, Arlette, when I came in?'

"The lamp was behind us, rather far off. I scarcely saw Guy's countenance, only his tall figure outlined by his dress coat, in the lapel buttonhole of which a bud formed a red spot . . . and, without my knowing why, the question that was trotting so hard through my head escaped from my lips:

"Guy, when, then, do you work?"
"He looked at me in astonishment:

""When do I work . . . at what?"

"'I mean, when do you attend to business that

does not serve merely for your pleasure?'

"I had not yet finished my sentence when I wished to recall it. Fortunately Guy did not seem to be dissatisfied. His eyes merely sought mine, as if he wanted thus to penetrate into my very thought.

"'Why do you ask me that question, Arlette?'

"'Oh! Guy, does it annoy you? I would be so very sorry for it! But I cannot conceal anything from you.'

"Because you are a good friend, thoroughly

sincere and faithful.'

"He said that to me very sweetly, with the

same expression in his eyes, and I felt my heart warm with pleasure on that account.

"Then he continued:

"'You have not answered me, Arlette; you

seem to desire that I work. Why?'

"'Because it seemed to me that all men ought to do so. I have so often heard papa repeat it to my brothers and set them the example! But perhaps it is not in Paris as it is at Douarnenez.'

"Guy's countenance was more serious than I

had ever seen it.

"'In Paris, as well as at Douarnenez, there are men who employ their time usefully for the benefit and well-being of others, who do not devote it all to their . . . distractions. There are others also who do the contrary. And you think that I belong to the category of these latter?'

"'Oh! Guy, I hope not!'

"'You hope? You are severe, child! At

what would you like me to work, then?'

"'I do not know. I am too ignorant to find out what useful occupation young men like you

ought to engage in.'

"'My poor little one, they have as much difficulty as you in discovering it, rest assured. What could I, for example, well be? I assure you that the longer I live, the more days there are on which I so ask myself. In the meantime I am striving to waste as little of my time as possible. I am striving to make my life as intelligent as I can. I read, I paint, I follow music. It is a Sybarite life, I know well. But, Arlette, one must be a little indulgent to those who are not

obliged to earn their daily bread. On that account they are often worth less than others, and

it is not absolutely their fault.'

"Guy, have I caused you annoyance by speaking to you thus? I entreat you, forgive me. My opinion signifies nothing at all. I cannot

judge like persons of mature years.'

"And that is why you are a living conscience. Forgive you, child? For what? For being right in despising the idle? Indeed, I hope that a day will come for me to be no longer ranked among them. Then, little Arlette, you will have the right to say to yourself that you have counted for much in my transformation! I will not be able to forget the advice that has fallen from your little girl's lips.'

"Wasn't it excellent of him to speak to me in this way? I was so happy thereat that I murmured: 'Thanks, Guy!' with all my heart. But I was thinking of so many things that then I remained mute, contemplating the fire that I did not see, or Guy's countenance ever very serious, almost grave. Nor did he, my great friend, speak any more. We were delightfully in that

silence.

"Unfortunately, my aunt returned, quite becapuchined, ready to leave, and, on finding us so, exclaimed:

"'How quiet! What! Arlette is not chatting?'

"It was Guy who answered in his customary

tone, with a tinge of irony:

"'We are reflecting, in consequence of a philosophical conversation that we have just had.'

"'Philosophical? Only that? You will tell me about it on the way. Let us leave.'

"Guy repeated:

"'Let us leave. I am entirely at your orders.'
"He arose. He said adieu to Madeleine, who had come in with her mother, and to me last. And as he held my hand, he leaned very low and kissed it.

"'Oh! Guy, what ceremony!' my aunt re-

marked in astonishment.

"'It is a homage that I am paying to wisdom, Louise.

"And they left.

"I was satisfied, satisfied! But I do not very clearly understand why."

"JANUARY 16.

"Oh! Why is that Jeanne d'Estève so pretty? Why do we meet her everywhere? Why do my aunt and Madeleine find her so much to their taste? Why does my aunt seem delighted when Guy is near her, when he chats, or dances, or even skates with her as he did yesterday? I, on the contrary, detest seeing them together; I even detest the idea that they meet almost every evening out in company, for Madame d'Estève knows all Paris and is at home only when she receives, when she is ill, or again in the morning. It is Guy who has told us so.

"But what does he think of this Jeanne whom everybody declares so charming? O God! how often, then, they so declare! Sometimes I have a wild idea to ask him about it. I have in my mind, on my lips, the words that I am going to

say, and then, when about to speak, my throat is pressed, and it stops my question on its way. How that question was still burning my mouth, only yesterday, when Guy came to ask me to skate with him, after having done so for a long time with Jeanne, after having remained with her while she was sipping her tea, quite slowly, pretending that she found it too hot! But Guy graciously said to me:

"'It is our turn now, my little friend. I have performed all my duties of politeness, and I am

going to think of my pleasure!'

"And I forgot the beautiful Jeanne. And we set out as if we were flying, quick, quick. But in the evening, whilst Madeleine and I were babbling as we were preparing for bed, my wise cousin exclaimed, all of a sudden, recalling our skating time:

"'How attractive that Jeanne is, then!'

"Immediately the little evil demon that moves in me as soon as there is question of her, rose up like a devil springing from a box, and I asked Madeleine:

- "'But why do you find Jeanne d'Estève so attractive?'
- "Because she is so, undoubtedly,' replied Madeleine in a tone that succeeded in routing my wisdom.
- "Because at the ball she is dancing all the time with the same cavalier, if he pleases her, and is chatting with him during the entire cotillion instead of waltzing, letting her eyes shine over her fan? because she manages to be always surrounded by gentlemen? because, in the last

place, she does a lot of things that you would at once find very improper if it was I who did them?'

"I had spoken in a single breath. I was ashamed of my wickedness, and yet I could not stop. Madeleine, who was putting up her hair in front of the glass, stood there in astonishment:

"'Arlette, what has taken hold of you? What has Jeanne done to you that you attack her so?'

"'I am not attacking her, I am asking you for an explanation,' I replied, teasing my poor innocent pillow. 'You are all in adoration before her, and I do not understand why, seeing that she does not make the same impression on me as on you, that is all!'

"'Well, I entreat you not to say so, especially in Guy's hearing, for your severity will seem to him at least odd,' rejoined Madeleine in her turn,

in a wrathy tone, quite rare in her.

"I said, my heart beating quickly:

"'He also admires her, then?'

"'I hope so indeed, and I hope with all my heart that he will come to admire her sufficiently to . . .'

"'To what?' I exclaimed, seeing Madeleine

stop short.

"' To never allow her to be criticised by malev-

olent persons.'

"Without knowing why, I was certain that Madeleine had just finished her sentence at random. But it was so useless to question her in order to know her real thought, that I did not even try. I only exclaimed, with all the conviction of my soul:

"'It does not concern Guy whether one criticises her or not. Ah! how I would like, then, that she would marry an officer or no matter what warrior who might carry her off very far! And

"Probably Madeleine's patience was exhausted, for she interrupted me and, in an angry tone, de-

clared:

"'You do not know what you are saying this evening, Arlette. Go to sleep at once; that will

be better for you. Good-night!'

"She grazed my hair with her lips. I returned her kiss to her without a word. She then went off to her room in quite a dignified manner. I quickly lay down; having put out my candle, I wept all my tears, with my nose on my pillow."

"JANUARY 22.

"There were people, many people, in the parlor. It was my aunt's day. Be it well understood, Jeanne d'Estève was there. As was her wont, she questioned me with that smile which makes me anxious to tell her that I am not a plaything for her, wishing to know if I had gone to another ball, and if I had danced at it with Guy. She always speaks to me of him, and then her eyes assume a mocking expression that I detest.

"He arrived exactly while she was still there, at the very moment when Madeleine, lending her aid to serving the tea, called me to assist her. I pretended not to hear. Guy approached from the young ladies' corner, after having bestowed his courtesies on the elderly persons in the gathering. He looked at Jeanne, who smiled at him while extending her hand to him. I surmised that he was going to sit down beside her. I felt myself quite small, quite powerless to keep him from doing so . . . and so as no longer to see them, I heard Madeleine's call. I served all that she wished; I wandered around the parlor, wherever she sent me; I bore myself, as much as she could wish, like a well-bred young lady. For a moment I found myself near them, when they were chatting so attentively that they did not notice me. She said to him:

"'It seems to me that you are rather neglect-

ing your doll to-day?'

"He repeated:
"'My doll?'

"'Oh! yes, your Breton doll. And she is going to have a grudge against you for it, the devil knows how! And against me still more. Oh! I understand that she amuses you. She is quite a strange girl! There are playthings for little children, and there are also for grown persons. And for men, are there not? Are they not, more or less, children of a larger growth. That is a truth which has long been acknowledged!'

"Was Guy dissatisfied or not with what she said? A wrinkle showed itself between his two eyebrows, and his voice was strange when he

answered:

"'Then you have concluded that my cousin Arlette, for I imagine it is of her you are speaking, is a doll to me?"

""What does one know, after all? In any case, it must be acknowledged that you take very

good care not to spoil her, but to have her keep all her moral freshness. It appears that you watch over her as would a good father of a family, that you go out walking with her, have taught her how to dance, that you choose her reading for her and become indignant when the poor girl wishes to dip into a romance the point of her little Breton nose in violation of Breton rules.'

"'Indeed I certainly think so, since I have charge of a soul. How well informed you are!

May one know by whom?'

"By rumor, most plainly! Have you, then, forgotten the saying: "Tattling as a rumor"?"
"While saying this she was looking at him

"While saying this she was looking at him with a peep from between her eyelids. She spoke in a somewhat mocking tone, but she was also smiling, and her mockery seemed as if being lost in her smile, a smile that moved the lips so as to show the teeth very prettily. And it seemed to me that those small teeth were biting into my heart, giving me the desire to weep. Then, so as no longer to see them, I turned around. I glided to the other end of the parlor, behind the palms, shutting my eyes so as to make sure that I would not look at them.

"But it was stronger than I, and I could not decide to be no longer uneasy about them. Father, they were still chatting! Behind her there was a tall lighted lamp, and the light was floating around her hair in such a way as to make a golden mist of it! Truly, at that moment, I believe that I would have given anything to have her brightness, her grace, her ease, and also her statuesque form, her red ivory-colored complex-

ion, her eyes saying so many things that I do not understand, but which Guy and all men do understand, for they keep them near her; to be, especially, able to chat like her, with that wit which kept Guy at her side!

"I do not know whether much time elapsed from when I observed them thus until I heard

Madeleine's voice:

"'Arlette, where, then, are you hiding? Ah! there you are! How pale you are! What is it ails you?'

"Instantly I became purple, and I said very

quickly:

"'Oh! no, I am not pale.'

"'Not now . . . you look like a cornpoppy. But you were not so a second ago. What ailed you?'

"'Nothing, indeed nothing! I am amusing

myself, I am listening, I am looking.'

"Madeleine did not insist. She is not curious

like me, and she continued quite naturally:

"'Mamma asks that you sing something, because Madame Harvet has heard a great deal of talk about you, and would like to listen to you.'

"Sing? I had quite a different subject in my head! I was going to answer Madeleine, point blank refusing her proposition; but I stopped. If I sang, I would stop their chatting. All at once I consented. I sat down at the piano, and I began a ballad which Guy always asks of me, that of the 'Forsaken.'

"A very strange thing then happened to me. It seemed to me all of a sudden that it was no longer the 'Forsaken' who was saying the words

I was repeating, but I who was crying them in despair; that it was I who was all alone, abandoned, I who could not endure that solitude, who was sad unto death, who had my throat full of sobs.

"When I had killed myself there was deep silence for a second, then a loud noise arose. All were applauding, I really think, and they thus reawoke me from my bad dream. My eyes were quickly turned toward Guy and Jeanne. At last, they were no longer chatting! Guy, with his back against the wall, was looking at me, at me, his doll!

"But she turned her head toward him, and, as I was not very far away, I heard her say with

her faint smile:

"'She is truly astonishing. I understand why she interests you. What a strange little girl! She seems as if she felt like a woman!'

"This time I could not distinguish Guy's reply; but, a few minutes later, as she bade him

adieu, she added:

"'Is it not to-morrow that we go skating?'

"And he answered as he bowed:

"'Oh! yes, with very great pleasure."

"She had gone, at last! But why had she left me the idea that to-morrow they would meet again, that they would chat as they had done to-day, and that on the day after to-morrow, always, it would be the same thing! And I, quite weak, could do nothing to prevent that? Guy I merely amuse! She has said so—I am his doll, that is, a little thing that neither loves nor thinks, without a heart, without a mind, without a soul,

without anything, which one leaves or takes ac-

cording to one's good pleasure.

"I would have liked to call out to Guy: 'Do not abandon me altogether for her!' And yet, never would my mouth have been able at that moment to pronounce such words. All at once I was at the same time afraid and anxious that he would read me through as he does so quickly, and to delay that moment I chatted with every-body but him, whom I shunned.

"He was going to leave. More than once had I met his eyes interrogating me. I heard his

voice asking me in a somewhat low tone:

"'What ails you, then, Arlette?'

"Then some evil demon or other urged me on. Without looking at him, I answered with a laugh which I still hear:

"'Oh! nothing! What would you like to ail

me?'

"And I fled to my room. I concealed my head in my handkerchief and I wept, wept, wept."

"The same evening, 11 o'clock.

"Probably I had my eyes still spoiled by my tears at the dinner hour, for my aunt was astonished at my sad mien. I may as well say I told her simply that I had a headache. And it was true, father, I assure you. But my heart was aching much more than my head. When Madeleine and I had gone up again to our rooms, I sat down at the foot of my bed, with my mind full of distracting thoughts. I was ever seeing again that Jeanne, so pretty, so amiable with Guy, whilst I had been quite dull. And I re-

gretted so much not being able to become reconciled with him!

"Oh! that Jeanne, who had brought so much

trouble between us!

"Suddenly I was startled as I heard Madeleine ask me:

"'Arlette, why do you so upset your hair and look so absent-minded?'

"'I am reflecting."

"'You are reflecting?'

"'Yes, I am thinking, as much as old folks, that life is a lamentable thing!' I remarked, being unable any longer to keep my desolation to myself.

"But instead of answering me in pitying words,

Madeleine smiled:

"'Oh! Arlette, what misanthropy! What happened to you this afternoon? You are no longer the same for quite a while. Guy remarked it as well as I, and asked me why you had that gloomy expression.'

"As I could not acknowledge the truth to

Madeleine, I put my headache in evidence.

"She was too discreet to insist; seeing that I did not wish to tell her anything, she said 'Good-

evening,' and left.

"Father, your little one would like indeed to find herself again with you at Douarnenez! Why do you not permit her yet to return? Why can she not huddle up against you and ask you in a low tone for what reason her heart is as heavy as if an enormous stone had suddenly fallen into it and remained there, crushing it!"

"JANUARY 28.

"Do not believe, father, what I have said to you against life. It is not detestable: on the contrary, it is exquisite, and it has moments so good that they make it pardon all the others. I am reconciled with Guy. He is not angry with me, and he assures me that he has never been so. It was this evening, at six o'clock, that we signed the treaty of peace. At six o'clock only! through my fault, because I had refused to go skating with Madeleine, so as not to interfere with Jeanne and him.

"My wise cousin, after having declared to me that I was very capricious, had been out with my aunt until near dinner hour, since I had said that I did not wish to pay visits after the skating time. When they had left, not being able to remain still with that agitation with which my heart and mind were filled, I went to look for Miss Ashton, and, directly in front of us, in silence, we had walked into the Avenue du Bois. But how lugubrious our walk was! I was as it were an old philosopher who, having nothing more to do with the pleasures, joys and happinesses of the world, would have firmly closed his doors against them, and would, with regretful eye, have considered them through his keyhole. I felt jealous of everybody whom we met and who was not lugubrious like the weather, like the glacial winter sky, like my heart, ever so full of sorrow! I was jealous of the children who were running around joyously, and I envied them; I envied also the trees and everything that did not think. I was thinking too much,

and especially was I seeing, just as if I had been there, Guy and her chatting the same as the evening before, as ever. What a comparison he must have made between her and me, a sulky

and fantastic little girl!

"Night was coming on, and we had to return. It was so necessary for me no longer to keep my distress to myself alone, that I went to my piano and sang, sang everything sad that I had in my thoughts, until my voice gave out. Then, all of a sudden, as I was standing in front of the fire, plunged in my reflections, I heard a brisk footstep in the neighboring parlor . . . that of Guy.

"I did not dare to run to him; scarcely did I risk looking at him, fearing lest he might wear a severe expression. But—what a delightful surprise—he was smiling as he approached, and he

said to me:

"'A veritable little Cinderella! All alone in the chimney corner whilst her big sisters are at the ball! Arlette, why did you not come to skate?'

"'Because I was sad!'

"And, incapable of further concealing my desolation, I exclaimed:

"'Oh! Guy, tell me that you have no grudge

against me!'

"'Have a grudge against you! for what?'

"'For my having shown myself disagreeable to you yesterday. But I was suffering, and . . .'

"'Suffering! Suffering from what, Arlette?'

"I remained silent, frightened at what I might acknowledge. He insisted:

"'Why do you not answer me? Have we misunderstood each other? Have I, then, hurt your feelings in any way, without intending it? Tell me, then, what it is, that I may at once beg your pardon for it. Have you forgotten that I am your great friend, and that from a friend one should conceal nothing?'

"He spoke to me with so much kindness, his serious eyes penetrating mine, that I no longer tried to dissemble the truth from him, and I

murmured:

"'Oh! Guy, it is too hard to think that I am to you only a Breton doll!'

"'A doll?'

"He seemed astonished. But, no doubt, he suddenly recalled himself, and then exclaimed, almost violently:

"'Who could have told you such a lie?'

"'No one has told me. I have heard some one say so to you.'

"'What "someone"? Mademoiselle d'Estève?'

"I bowed my head, not being able to articulate a word.

"'And you believed that she spoke the truth?

Answer, Arlette, I entreat you!

"'Why should I not have believed it? Compared with her, I clearly understand that I am only an insignificant creature, good to amuse you sometimes, that is all. I understand that I have exactly, as compared with her, the value of a doll, that I must seem to you a baby that is often wearisome and stupid. Before having heard it said of me, I did not think of it; but now, I no longer deceive myself!'

"It was stronger than all my resolves to be courageous! In proportion as I spoke, I was the more convinced of my unworthiness, and my tears suddenly flowed. I felt myself so much like a poor trinket worthy of being set aside or sent back to Douarnenez! I quickly picked up my handkerchief to conceal my eyes in it, but he stopped my hands on the way and enclosed them in his own, as on the day when he had scolded me about the book. He remained silent for a second, looking at me with an expression that I would like to see on him always, and which penetrated me beneficently to the very depths of my soul; then he said very gently:

"'Oh! the foolish little girl who tortures herself on account of idle stories, who does not notice what she is to those who surround her!'

"Something in his voice, as well as in his words, suddenly dispelled my grief, and I murmured passionately:

"Guy, do not admire Mademoiselle d'Estève

so much!

"'But how have you learned, child, that I admire her?'

"'I see it clearly! And I am not astonished at it. She is beautiful! Nevertheless, Madeleine thinks that you do not yet admire her sufficiently, for otherwise you would do something I know not what that would delight her . . . and my aunt also!'

"Guy's eyebrows came close together, and he shrugged his shoulders, his expression changing:

"'Well, I am of the firm belief that my sister and my niece will never be delighted in that

manner. Do not imagine, following their example, Arlette, that Mademoiselle d'Estève is to me the ideal of the young lady. You would be absolutely mistaken!'

"I stopped just in time not to bound with pleasure . . . and I asked, with a very slight remainder of uneasiness, already on the point of

taking wing:

"'Then, Guy, the real truth is that you do not find me too wearisome?'

"'Do I look as if I entertained such an idea?'

"'No . . . but perhaps you conceal your

opinion from kindness of soul.'

"He burst out laughing in a hearty manner that sent my little remainder of uneasiness to be

lost in space.

- "'I would not be capable, I assure you, either of so much charity or of so much dissimulation. The *real* truth is that minutes have no duration for me when we are babbling together!'
 - "'And '"'And what?'

"I hesitated for a second. Then, so much the worse! I risked:

"'And you interest yourself in me more than in Jeanne d'Estève, do you not, since I am your cousin?'

"'Most clearly so! To me she is only a stranger . . . and you, you are my little friend. Are you reassured now, and do you believe me?'

"Did I believe him! I asked only that.

"Father, I am a little afraid that I am a very bad creature, a selfish and heartless child. How, while far from you, can I find myself happy, as I do not recall having ever been so? One might say that in my inner me a great flame has been kindled. It keeps my heart warm, and by its light everything is as beautiful as in a dream!"

* * * * * * *

The pages scribbled by Arlette stopped at this cry of juvenile eagerness. She let them fall again in front of her and remained dreamy, her chin resting on her little joined hands, entirely carried away by the delightful dream her youth afforded her. Darkness was thickening around her, the room was now lighted only by the flames from the fireplace. She paid no attention to this. And, brought back to full reality, she was startled when the door opened and Madeleine appeared on the threshold.

"Goodness! how dark it is here! Arlette, are you asleep? We have left you alone too long,

my poor little one!"

Too long! Was it, then, so long since Madame

Chausey and Madeleine had gone out?

And, looking at the clock, Arlette then saw that the whole afternoon had passed away for her in that charming resurrection!

CHAPTER IX

"Now what are you reading so attentively, Louise?" asked Guy, as he came into the little parlor where his sister, chilly installed at her fireplace, was awaiting the hour for going out.

For the young man she had a smile of wel-

come, while extending her hand to him:

"What am I reading? A letter."

"Louise, I assure you that my eyes have already taught me so."

"A letter from Madame Harvet."

Guy put on an expressive wry face. That Madame Harvet irritated him to a remarkable degree, with her outbursts of enthusiasm that were too often untimely and her way of considering as a reality all that her fertile imagination discovered and invented.

"What the deuce does that lunatic of a woman want of you? To ask assistance of you for some work destined to be a fizzle as soon as she lends her aid to it?"

"How severe! Well, you have not hit it at all. You must change the course of your suppositions. It is of Arlette that there is question in Madame Harvet's letter."

"Of Arlette!" he repeated, abandoning the careless attitude that he had assumed, with his back against the mantelpiece. "What can that hair-brained woman wish in regard to her?"

"Something good . . . for she has an ex-

cellent heart, though her mind may be far from sedate."

"But what does she want anyway? Does she

think of making Arlette her heiress?"

At this Madame Chausey burst out into a hearty laugh which succeeded in routing Guy.

"Guy, you should improvise as a romancer, a class of writers that do not cultivate probability. You have a fertile imagination. Unfortunately, there is no question of Arlette being transformed into an heiress. It is in another way that Madame Harvet thinks of effecting her happiness. She is thinking of getting her married to . . ."

"Of getting Arlette married! What invention

is this?"

Madame Chausey's amiable countenance be-

came somewhat embrowned.

"An invention due to Madame Harvet's kindly heart. She has heard me several times express the desire to get Arlette married, and as she knows of a party suitable to offer to me for the little girl, she sends me a lot of information on this subject."

"And you receive it seriously, as if you did not know her? Leave the poor little one in peace, then! It is a veritable mania thus to

want to get everybody married!"

He had spoken with such vivacity that his

sister looked at him in astonishment.

"Ah! there, Guy, will you explain to me why you were startled so, exactly as if there was question of yourself getting married? That is very far from your antipathy to 'honest marriage.'"

"I was not startled," he said, taking up and

laying down impatiently a fine ivory statuette. "But I did not expect to see poor little Arlette so soon put in the position of entering upon housekeeping . . . and under Madame Harvet's auspices, she being an inveterate matchmaker who cannot see a bachelor without being at once seized with the desire of attacking his liberty! Well, Louise, I cannot understand why the mother of a family like you should give a moment's attention to such a plan! Arlette is still a child. When her time comes, she will certainly meet a marriageable man on her way, she is so attractive!"

"Yes, but attractive without dowry, which greatly diminishes attractiveness," interrupted Madame Chausey, her eyebrows somewhat contracted.

What whim, then, made Guy thus rise in rebellion against a plan of which he had only the most elementary knowledge, of whose details he

was ignorant?

"Disinterested men are rare. We all know it, alas! and Arlette is absolutely penniless. This marriage would be to her an unexpected chance. And so I have spoken of it to her father, not wishing to undertake anything without his consent, and . . ."

"And you have that consent?"

"Yes, I am going to show you his letter."

She arose and began searching among the papers locked up in her secretary. Guy was distraughtly looking at the flame in the fireplace, his lips bedarkened, and an unwonted wrinkle furrowing his brow.

"How is it, Louise, that until this moment you have never spoken a word to me of your matrimonial intentions in regard to Arlette?"

"To be honest with you, because I had no opportunity of doing so. Ah! here is the letter!"

A few lines only, traced in an irregular hand, as if wearied. And the young man read:

"DEAR MADAM,

"It is ever so good of you to take so much interest in my Arlette's future. Deep as may be the grief which I will feel at losing her now, I am assuredly quite ready to forget it in thinking only of her happiness alone. In my state of health, moreover, her marriage would be to me am unexpected favor. I would thus be freed from my terrible and constant fears on this subject. And so I would not know how to thank you too much for deigning to gain all the information in regard to the plan in question . . ."

"You see, Guy," said Madame Chausey, interrupting the reading which her brother was doing in an undertone.

He repeated: "I see," while glancing over the concluding lines, in which the doctor excused himself for the shortness of his letter, caused by the state of extreme fatigue brought upon him by the typhus epidemic at Douarnenez.

"Poor man!" Guy murmured.

In his thoughts was revived the memory of his first and melancholy conversation with Yves Morgane in the working office darkened by the storm. Then, suddenly, the large sad room was lit up by the apparition of a gilded white childish countenance from which laughed sparkling eyes and fresh lips.

Guy slightly moved his head backward as if

to repel the vision, and he said:

"For what happy mortal do you intend the adorable woman that Arlette will be?"

"I do not know him personally. He is the son of a very old lady friend of Madame Harvet's. He owns valuable property in Anjou and attends to it himself all the year round."

"A sort of civilized agriculturer. What!"

"A man of good sense who closely supervises the tilling of his lands and leads an easy life on them, for he has a certain income."

"And he would take a woman who has none?" Guy sneeringly interrupted. "He is, then, oneeyed, one-armed, or something of that sort?"

"Not at all. If I am to depend on the eulogistic information that I have in regard to him, Arlette would find in him an excellent husband."

Guy bowed.

"Perfect. So this model worker is disinterested without being obliged to be so."
"He is a widower," Madame Chausey ex-

plained.

"And old! That settles it!"

"No, he is not old. He is thirty-two, and his children are quite young. He adores them, and it is on their account especially that he desires to marry again. He wishes to meet a sweet and simple young girl who does not dread living constantly in the country. Indeed, Guy, I do not understand you! From seeing and hearing you ordinarily, one would think that you take a sincere interest in Arlette, and now that there is question of a plan for her future, you think only

of sneering!"

She stopped, really dissatisfied with her brother's attitude, whose motive she did not catch, supposing that he had one. But their looks met, and together, their minds relaxed, they began to laugh.

Guy bent toward Madame Chausey and with a brotherly kiss caressed her waving hair, as he had so much liked to do when he was a little boy.

"Louise, do not feel put out at me for this. I am persuaded that you are thinking only of Arlette's happiness; but I must say that the idea seems to me quite strange to want to make a wife and a stepmother of our little friend. What does the child herself say of this proposition?"

"I will not speak to her about it until I receive fresh orders. It is useless to set her young brain aboiling, if the affair is to stop where it

is."

"Wisely reasoned!" Guy approved. But despite his tone of ever rather sneering banter, the sound of his voice lacked pleasantness.

He arose, took a few aimless steps in the room, with pensive, almost sombre, countenance; then

he stopped, and changing his tone:

"I must leave you, Louise; I have a fencing

lesson for four o'clock."

He did not continue. From the very bottom of his thoughts a pitiless voice was reminding him of the frivolity of the occupations that filled up his hours. Strange to say, he never was more

conscious of this than since his conversation with Arlette on the moral obligation of work. A moment ago he had sneered at that unknown man who was devoting his whole life to the care of his estates; that man, however, was not a unit to be overlooked in the human race, not a dilettante clubman, fleeing from every yoke.

His sister's voice aroused him:

"As you still have some time to spare, listen to me, Guy; we will go out together. I will dress at once. Arlette is coming to take me."

"She has gone out already?"

"Naturally. The more she is in motion, the more satisfied she is. She went to escort Madeleine to her philosophy course, and, as philosophy to her seems rather austere, she will not wait for the lecture. We will both of us go to do some visiting, and then we will pick up Madeleine, who is saturated with philosophy. Will you ring for Adèle to come and dress me? In a moment I

will be with you."

He bowed his head and let Madame Chausey disappear in her room. He stopped at the window and remained standing, his look lost in the pale winter sky. Why, then, had his sister's words, in regard to Arlette's very humble position, which made any union difficult for her, so keenly shocked him who, however, was so strong for his years and had never entertained the idea that he could marry a penniless woman? Why, then, was he so wearied by the marriage plan evolved for his little friend?

What did it matter to him, indeed, whether she got married or not? He did not pretend,

however, that he would like to see her remain forever the child that she was in his eyes, because thus he found her exquisite. No matter whether she married some Breton or other, or indeed that unknown man coming suddenly from the depths of his Anjou, he would in any case lose sight of her. A moment, soon or late, must come when she would no longer be the delightful and confiding little friend who was dear to him. was inevitable. Why did he, the skeptic Parisian, a man of experience, in love with his liberty, allow himself thus to be disturbed by that prospect?

"What a foolish being I make with my musings!" he murmured, stirred up by a mute anger

against himself.

And, to escape from his thoughts, he did as Arlette would do in like case, he sat down at the piano and began playing as his impressions dictated to him, beginning a feverish and passionate gipsy air, of nervous ardor, suddenly interrupted by a dreamy song. The notes glided under his fingers, but his mind was none the less following out the mysterious work of analysis which irritated him to such an extent that, throwing a vibrating harmony into the keyboard, he stopped.

"Oh! Guy, why do you not play on? More!"

exclaimed a fresh voice.

Arlette was there, standing in the parlor threshold, her face quite rosy from the cold and caressed by the fur collar, her shining eyes, with velvety reflexes, fixed on Guy.

"More!" she repeated. "Resume that gipsy song. It is mine, that which I love most!"

But he was no longer disposed to play well, and shook his head:

"I was murdering it now. You know that I am a capricious man in music. This evening, at some other time, I will play it for you."

"Is that a serious promise?"

"Quite serious."

"Very well, then. Let us chat . . . so much the more, Guy, as I must ask you your opinion on a certain matter."

"I am entirely at your orders."

Unceremoniously she sat down on the arm of a vast armchair, but remained silent, her eyes fixed obstinately on the arabesques in the carpet.

"Well, Arlette?"

"Well, Guy. But you promise that you will not poke fun at me, that you will not repeat a single syllable of what I am going to say?"

"Not a single one! I will be as mute as a

tomb."

"I would prefer a more pleasant comparison. Then! Guy, does. . . Do you not think that . . . when one asks a young girl if

. . . she would like to . . . get married, . . . it is somewhat with an intention?"

"Arlette, what do you want to get at?" remarked Guy, whose features suffered a slight

contraction.

"Do you not suspect that, for some reason or

other, my aunt is thinking . . ."
She stopped. The rose hue on her cheeks had suddenly deepened so as to become a superb carnation, and her ungloved little fingers were teasing the soft nap of the chair arm. Guy was listening attentively; but, as she was silent, he again asked:

"Well, Arlette, what may Louise be thinking

about in regard to you?"

From the tips of her lips, making up her mind, she quickly flung, confiding and delighted:

"She wishes me to get married!"

"Really!" said the young man, shocked by a disagreeable impression, though he expected the reply. "Really! And may one know how she

put that remarkable idea into your head?"

"Guy, do not find me too ridiculous! These days, even this morning, she turned the conversation on this subject, and, in a special manner, she asked me whether I could be tempted to enter upon housekeeping."

"And you answered her that marriage, in your estimation, is purgatory on earth, and that you

would take good care not to try it?"

"Oh! Not at all! I did not answer her in that way! I do not think anything of the sort!"

"Yet, if my memory serves me right, you made declarations of that sort to me at Douarnenez,

even on the Ris road."

"Oh! at that time I had only Madame Morgane's experience! But you have told me that I must not believe in it, and now I have my own experience, which has shown me that you were right!"

"Ah! so it is I who prompted your conversion?"
She bowed her head with a half serious, half pleasant air. A joyous flash shone in her vel-

vety pupils.

"What a fine work I have accomplished in that!"

"You have not accomplished it all alone! Guy, do not be proud; Charlotte and Pierre have assisted you very much. I know now that it is a charming thing to be married, and I . . ."

"And you would be very well satisfied to

marry again also."

Archly she acknowledged, with a purple flame on her cheeks:

"It seems to me that it would not weary me!"

"Well, good luck, Mademoiselle Arlette! Accept the first presentable individual who will offer you his heart and his hand. Be happy and have no disillusion on the charms of the conjugal venture."

He spoke with such bitterness, under his apparent, yet somewhat biting, sarcasm, that she revolted, quite disconcerted:

"Oh! Guy, how cranky you are to-day!"

"Because I do not sing with you a lively hymn on the happiness of Hymenæa? What would you? Unfortunately, I am no longer only seventeen!"

"Because, without any reason, you assume a

quite disagreeable tone in answering me!"

She spoke so truly, in regard to his tone, that he remained silent for a moment. Why was he in such an ugly mood, irritated at himself, at mankind, even at the mean winter weather, agitated by an evil desire to cast a shadow on the smiling and juvenile confidence of that child whose ease exasperated him?

"I make all my excuses to you," he resumed

slowly, "if I have spoken to you in a surly tone."

"Very surly, as to a child that one scolds. I will soon be eighteen. I am a young lady."
"Yes, you are right. You are no longer a

child."

He repeated these words, at the same time taking her in with his glance. She had remained seated on the arm of the chair, her small, wellclad feet scarcely touching the floor with their pointed toes, her nimble bust closely outlined by the cloth bodice that showed her harmonious lines. In the aureola of her gainsborough her face stood out radiantly with all the brightness of youth in bloom. But at that moment her warmly enpurpled lips were as serious as her look, the smiling brightness of which was soft-

ened by a pensive expression.

No, she was no longer a child, nor even a little girl. She was truly becoming a young lady. Why until that moment had he not been struck by this? By what aberration had he persisted in ever seeing in her only the playful little creature who was running up the steep rocky hillside? Yet he knew well that she was more, he who had better than any one penetrated into the innermost recesses of her moral being. Behind that forehead veiled by wild little hairs palpitated a very keen intellect, an enthusiastic thought, spontaneously open to every beauty. That young body, slender and fine, enclosed a soul of fire, tender, passionate, adorably limpid and frank. And then, some day or other, an unknown man would come; to himself he would

draw that thoroughly new soul and thought, he would make them his precious own, and he would have the right to tease those who, having had that treasure within their reach, had not, like veritable madmen, deigned to seize it!

"Guy, why are you not saying anything to

me? Are you angry, out and out?"

Without being conscious of it, she extended her hand toward him, with a little more than faint movement. He started, snatched brusquely from his dreaming. And, without being rude this time, he repeated:

"Angry? Why should I be angry?"

"Because I told you that you were cranky!"

In spite of himself, he smiled, so little as he would have wished, amused at the contrast between the familiar expression that she used and the seriousness of his anxious countenance.

"Certainly not, I am not angry. If any one had the right to be so, it would rather be you, for, I must confess—humbly—I have fully deserved, without wishing it, the reproach that you have made to me. I am very much confused at

it. Do you not forgive me, Arlette?"

As her only answer she extended both her hands to him. For a second he held them in his, prompted by a faint desire to carry them to his lips, to kiss them leisurely, those little hands over which no one yet but herself had any rights. Yet he let them fall again without his mouth having touched them.

Contented, she exclaimed:

"Then we are reconciled! You will not say any more harsh things to me when I confide my suppositions to you . . . on the subject of my aunt's ideas? You will not scold me again?"

"I will not scold you again, if it be the case that I have ever scolded you. I wish with all my heart that your hopes be fully realized. Are you satisfied with me?"

"Very well satisfied, my great friend!"

These few words fell very sweet from her lips, despite the drolly solemn tone with which she purposely uttered them; and at the sound of that young voice a secret fibre twitched in Guy's heart.

At that very moment Madame Chausey entered.

"Guy, here I am ready. What! Arlette, you are here and you did not notify me?"

"Aunt, I was chatting with Guy while wait-

ing for you!"

"You were giving him your confidences? And, in exchange, he gave you his?" Madame Chausey asked, in a tone of pleasantry. But her glance sought that of her brother, who answered her mute question with a negative sign.

Arlette, on her part, replied, throwing back

her head:

"Guy never gives me confidences. He is like a Turk: he regards woman as an inferior being in whom he must not confide, and he proves it. That's all."

"That's all! Guy is indeed a miscreant. It is a long time since I told him so. By-the-bye, let us go quickly. Madeleine will be waiting for us."

Guy went down with his sister and Arlette.

He put them in the carriage, but he did not go in with them. After having clasped the young girl's little hand, confidingly given up to his, he went away toward his club, saying to himself that man is indeed the most stupid of all animals.

CHAPTER X.

A FEW days later, as breakfast was ended, Madame Chausey said suddenly, while poking her little stove:

"I am sometimes very desirous of going to see how the hothouse palms in the Acclimatation are coming along. Will you accompany me, Arlette?"

"With the greatest pleasure, aunt, if I do not interfere with you!" she remarked, all at once taken with the proposition. She liked very much to go out with Madame Chausey, who was always very affectionate to her.

"Then it is understood. Since Madeleine has her singing lesson to-day, both of us will go alone

to admire the palms."

And things having been thus arranged without awakening the slightest suspicion in Arlette, she and her aunt were on their way, an hour

later, toward the Jardin d' Acclimatation.

It being yet very early in the afternoon, the hothouse was almost deserted. Madame Chausey took it in with a rapid glance. A few solitary strollers were stepping the finely graveled walks; others occupied some of the benches. Among the latter Arlette's keen eyes at the first glance descried a well-known countenance.

"Oh! aunt, Madame Harvet! What weari-

ness! Both of us were so much at ease to-

gether!"

Madame Chausey smothered this awkward remark under a rapid "Hush!" and Arlette, disturbed in her pleasure by this meeting, followed her without any enthusiasm.

Madame Harvet, having perceived them, ad-

vanced with blooming mien.

"Dear madam, what a happy chance! How delighted I am to see you! And Mademoiselle Arlette also! Good-day, my little darling. Dear madam, allow me to present to you . . ."

She turned around, but no one was near her. Seated on the bench which she had just left there was a young man, very stout and very tall, who was looking at the gravel with an absorbed air.

Madame Chausey asked herself uneasily:

"Can that man there be the object in question? He is a veritable colossus! And what a country-looking air he has!"

As if she had guessed at this mute question, Madame Harvet, ever jubilant, hurried toward

the very robust stranger.

"Monsieur Amelot, will you come, so that I may present you to Madame Chausey and her

niece, Mademoiselle Arlette Morgane?"

The stout man arose at once, so quickly that his cane rolled on the gravel, and, in the effort he made to pick it up again, he stumbled against a chair near him. Presently, with an instinctive movement, Arlette had already raised the cane that had rolled to her feet, so difficult did it seem to her for that voluminous personage to be

able to stoop to the ground to recover his property.

"Oh! miss, I humbly beg your pardon," he stammered in a tone at the same time confused

and vexed. And he seized his cane.

"Monsieur Amelot," presented Madame Harvet, whom the scene in no way disconcerted; "the son of one of my good lady friends, an in-

habitant of Anjou."

This time Monsieur Amelot saluted without embarrassment, though awkwardly. He had a corroded look, a colored skin, reddish blond hair that hung down over a low forehead, and an air of extreme self-sufficiency that was oddly allied with a rustic aspect.

"May we sit down there for a moment?" Madame Harvet proposed. "It is delightful in that hothouse! You recognized it, Monsieur

Amelot, did you not?"

"Oh! no, madam. Never, during my journeys to Paris, have I had time to lose in coming here!"

Arlette cast a glance of astonishment toward the giant—as in a whisper she had nicknamed him—for he had just answered in a brusque tone that did not belong to refined politeness. Madame Chausey intervened, wishing to play her maternal part conscientiously:

"Do you come to Paris often, sir?"

"As seldom as I can, madam. I am out-andout displeased with it. Its air is unhealthy. One feels ill in it! At every street corner one runs the risk of being crushed, even by lean beasts. People eat badly, the wine is adulterated there. Oh! the deuce take it, no, I do not like Paris . . . especially when I am there, as at present, with my children! And so I scarcely ever come to it, except for the agricultural show, or when I am forced. This time I needed ploughs, and I have found magnificent ones. There are new models that are astonishing! Industry is really making marvelous progress!"

Madame Chausey gave a vague sign of acquiescence. The progress of industry, as regards ploughs, chilled her all the way through, and that common rustic seemed to her quite displeas-

ing.

"Ah! there are the children!" Madame Harvet exclaimed at that moment. Those two little ones had nothing in their heads but getting up on a camel; and to keep them quiet their nurse was walking them up and down in front of the parrots!

And, taking advantage of Monsieur Amelot's turning his head toward his progeny, she whispered, ever delighted, to Madame Chausey:

"He is a superb man, is he not?"

"Yes, he has a fine figure," evasively remarked Madame Chausey, whose mind was made up.

"And his children are as remarkable as he is.

Look at them!"

Yes, certainly, they were worth the trouble of being looked at. They were extraordinarily stout and fat, their cheeks scarlet; the boy, like a little simpleton in a goldbeater's skin with his long overcoat falling almost to his heels; the little girl, dressed in a bright blue gown which made her short person look still more voluminous.

And to herself Madame Chausey in distraint murmured:

"But they are real monsters! One might exhibit them at a fair, as phenomena of stoutness!"

They were at the same time phenomena of savagery, for when Madame Harvet undertook to approach them so as to present them to Madame Chausey, the boy took to uttering piercing cries, and the little girl to kicking out her feet in space. The father, however, was contemplating them with a peaceful and complaisant eye.

"They do not look puny, do they, madam? and they know how to make use of their lungs and their members! Come, keep still, my lambs.

Obey your dear father."

But their dear father, no doubt, did not know the secret of having his authority respected on every occasion, for the stout Felix continued his howling, and the little girl her vigorous kicking, while lisping in a groanful tone:

"I want to go on the camel! on the camel at

once!"

Seeing which, Madame Chausey made up her mind to have nothing more to do with them. Arlette was curiously examining them. The Douarnenez children were not, by long odds, as wild to her as those two young products of Anjou.

"What superb children, are they not, miss?" again repeated Madame Harvet, who did not seem to suspect the impression produced by her

protégés.

"They seem to enjoy splendid health," said Arlette, with enthusiasm. "But can one never approach them without being so disagreeable to them?"

With a kindly smile Monsieur Amelot ex-

plained in a sententious tone:

"They are always so when a stranger speaks to them. It is because they are not yet familiarized with the pitiless yoke of civilization. It is a principle with me that children, like the grass in the meadows, must be let grow at full liberty, so as to give them solid temperaments. Mine, up to the age of six, will be restrained in nothing!"

"And then?" asked Madame Chausey, who, with her customary good humor, took a pleasant view of the incident. That stout man, pretentious and stupid, who would not have her niece,

amused her very much.

"Then, madam, as at about the age of six reason comes to them . . ."

"I thought that the age of reason was seven?"

remarked Arlette, mischievously.

But Monsieur Amelot did not hear, or thought it unworthy of him to take up this frivolous remark, and he continued, impertubable:

"At about six reason comes to them . . . and then begins the parents' real part, a part so serious that it frightens me and which I acknowledge myself far from worthy to perform alone!"

An imperceptible silence answered this declaration made with solemnity, and Madame Chausey, to change the conversation, asked, putting herself in keeping:

"And you are right in praising yourself, monsieur, for that method of education? As I am destined to be a grandmother at a time more or less near, it gives me pleasure to collect the opin-

ions of competent persons on the subject."

Arlette cast a glance of surprise at her aunt and another, far from flattering, at the two phenomena that were sullenly scolding in unison to get the "dear father" to bring them to see the camel. But the "dear father" hardly thought of such a thing. Flattered by Madame Chausey's question, he answered very eagerly:

"Madam, this education is perfect, for it allows

children's natures to develop freely."

"In good as well as in evil?" And this extreme liberty does not make them rather undisciplined?"

"Madam, when my children exceed certain bounds, I am satisfied with warning them of it

by administering a severe rebuke to them."

"Oh! sir, you do not mean to say that these poor little ones are sometimes whipped?" Arlette interrupted, seized with compassion for the two phenomena.

In a dignified way Monsieur Amelot declared:

"I do not whip them, miss, I correct them. I attend at the birth in them of the feeling of duty, and by the single means which they can yet understand. For, to sum up, children are only little animals."

"Monsieur Amelot, you are astonishing! astonishing!" remarked Madame Harvet, laughing

to split her sides.

Nothing robbed her of her equanimity, and she did not seem to have the least idea of the impression produced by her candidate. "Ah! How original are those men who live outside of cities!"

Modestly Monsieur Amelot replied:

"I do what I can, madam. But I would like to have taken better advantage of the admirable teachings contained in Rousseau's 'Emile,' one of my favorite books."

"You read a great deal, sir?" asked Madame

Chausey, in surprise.

"No, not much, for I like only serious reading, and I despise romances, which are all only a collection of follies. My greatest pleasure is to read our newspaper, the Anjou Progress. It is admirably well informed on all the news of the country and filled with excellent advice on the subject of agriculture. Last year, for example, when fodder . . ."

None of them ever knew what Monsieur Amelot was going to say on fodder, for a violent quarrel had just broken out between the two phenomena; Felix was madly pulling a lock of Pauline's hair, and she, with both feet and hands, was striving to get herself free. Monsieur Amelot left the unfortunate maid to extricate herself as best she could from the row between the two combatants, and, as Arlette arose with an instinctive movement to separate them, he stopped her with a condescending smile:

"Do not disturb yourself, miss; they have disputes like that very often. I do not oppose them. Quarrels form character. I interfere only on great occasions, when their maid no longer really knows what to do with them. Besides, I would not have time to restore peace between them on

every occasion, for I spend the greater part of the day in overseeing my farms!"

His voice became so pompous when he uttered these words: "my farms," that involuntarily Madame Chausey and Arlette exchanged meaning glances, while Monsieur Amelot concluded in the same tone:

"My property is one of the most extensive in the department. If I had desired, I could have been named deputy at the last elections,

And he indulged in a self-satisfied swagger:

"Since I am an authority in the country. But I confess I did not feel that I had the courage to accept the feverish life of men of politics. I will never belong but to my children and to the woman who will deign to accept the task of a mother toward them!"

This time Madame Chausey's eyebrows frowned slightly at this untimely allusion, and she cast an uneasy glance toward her niece. But Arlette had heard nothing. She was looking attentively into the green depth of a walk along which a tall and slender man was advancing. Then an exclamation of joy escaped from her:

"Oh! aunt, I am not mistaken. There comes

Guy! It is Guy!"

In truth it was indeed Guy who was coming, with curious eyes. He exchanged a slight sign of understanding with his sister, while bowing to Madame Harvet, and catching the drift of the words that Arlette addressed to him in an undertone:

"You are going to see, Guy, what a funny

gentleman is with Madame Harvet."

The latter eagerly prepared to bring about new introductions; but even before it had been possible for the men to exchange a single word, a furious voice arose behind the group, apostrophising Amelot's scion's maid:

"See there, girl, you cannot, then, pay attention to your brats! But look at your boy, for

all sakes! Ah! the cur!"

All turned around. While the maid was trying to distract the wailing Pauline, who was ever bent on wanting to get on the camel, her brother found nothing better to distract him than to pluck all the flowers that could be found within his reach and to scatter them on the gravel of the walks. In his hand he still held a superb flowered branch. The exasperated guard snatched it from him, and immediately clamors arose so deafening that from every corner of the hothouse promenaders appeared.

"The administration will make you pay for such destruction," repeated the ever-furious guard. "When one has such rompers of children, one should watch over them, by thunder!"

Very red, Monsieur Amelot scolded in his turn: "Try to be polite, in the first place. And you,

be quiet at once, you cursed scamp! Do you hear what your dear father is saying to you

. . do you hear?"

If the little fellow heard, he did not seem to pay much attention. His howling resounded, so much the more as he felt the paternal thunders ready to fall on his head.

"Ah! you will not keep quiet? Well, you

are going to cry for something!"

And, without a shadow of ceremony, he grabbed the urchin, and administered to him a brief, but vigorous correcting before any one had had time to interfere.

"Sir! oh! sir, let him be!" entreated Arlette, roused to pity by young Felix's cries, to which

were now added those of his sister.

"Do not disturb yourself, miss. I have accustomed him to this. He knows that he ought to be silent when his dear father orders him to be so. Otherwise he is punished. It is all over, now. Go, sir."

And, quite out of breath, he set the culprit at liberty, whilst he himself fell into the power of

the guard, the representative of justice.

"But, Louise, that man is simply an idiot! Let us get away. You must be edified," Guy

whispered in Madame Chausey's ear.

A wild desire to laugh took possession of him, seeing the grotesqueness of the scene: Monsieur Amelot struggling with his interlocutor's claims; Arlette trying to console the stout Felix, who was looking with moist and sad eye at the tear stains on his cherry cravat, whilst the tenacious Pauline began over again to claim the camel.

"Suppose we bring these doves at last to see the camel?" Madame Harvet smilingly pro-

posed.

But the amount of patience that Madame Chausey was able to dispose of was exhausted, and the old lady's unknowingness, on this occasion, was beginning to pall on her. And so,

without heeding the hint about the camel, she said:

"Dear madam, you will excuse us if we leave you . . . but I have something to do in Paris, and I am very much afraid that I will

now be late in keeping my engagement."

"What! you want to leave? It is not possible! Monsieur Amelot has gone to explain . . . wait till he returns. He would be in despair if he could not take leave of you! Look, there he comes!"

The good lady might have expended very much more eloquence without any result. Madame Chausey was resolute. In spite of herself, then, she had to receive the adieus of aunt and niece, without mentioning those of Guy, who seemed in as laughing a mood as the pretender was otherwise when saluting Madame Chausey and Arlette, still quite red and furious from the scene with the winter garden guard.

"Well, Arlette, on the whole and in all conscience, what do you think of the dear father?" Guy asked, when they were outside the hothouse.

And he put the question so quizzically that Arlette's long restrained wild laugh broke loose, joyous, pearly, deafening, infecting Madame Chausey and Guy.

"The 'dear father' is a ridiculous man and

abominably brutal!"

"Abominably? Nothing if not that! H'm, what severity! Then tell me, you would not like a husband of that sort?"

"A husband like him? Oh! Why do you ask

me that? Is it because . . ."

"Oh! no, Guy is jesting," Madame Chausey hastily interposed. "Do not fear, darling. I assure you that not one of us intends ever letting you marry a person as ridiculous as him."

And Arlette did not know that on that day

she had been the heroine of an interview.

CHAPTER XI.

Nor did she learn any more about it the following days; any more than she knew that Madame Harvet's protégé had judged her a creature of luxury, incapable of performing in his house the part that he intended for her, that of a housekeeper and, at the same time, a bogy

toward his two phenomena.

Moreover, she did not even dream any more of that unknown man, thrown in her way by chance, she believed. A single thought now occupied her wholly. Indeed, on the very next day after the interview in the winter garden, Madame Chausey received a letter from Mademoiselle Malouzec, informing her that the doctor, who had overworked himself during the epidemic, had suffered so serious a crisis of his heart trouble that the outcome was to be dreaded and that Arlette's immediate return seemed necessary. In every way her presence would do good to her father, who acknowledged at that moment that he had suffered much from the separation exacted by him. Mademoiselle Catherine concluded by entreating Madame Chausey to prepare Arlette for that sudden return, adding that she herself would write to her to tell her that, called to Paris by business, she would bring her back to Douarnenez.

Then, two days later, there came a dispatch

from Mademoiselle Catherine. The doctor's condition remained very serious, he might be carried off in a crisis, and the old maid was coming in

haste to bring Arlette.

The poor little one was deeply affected by this sudden recall, despite all the precautions with which Madame Chausey had surrounded it; she had not even had the courage to reveal to her her father's true condition. And so, at the mere idea of seeing him again, Arlette showed a joy that upset Madame Chausey's compassionate heart, yet, odd as it may seem, from the moment she learned that she was about to take her departure, her whole laughing animation had subsided. An impression of anguish preyed on her every time the idea of such an early departure, perhaps without return, came back to her. Thus her happy life in those surroundings in which she had been so affectionately received was ended! And were ended also those delightful musical evenings with Guy, their long chats, their walks!

And, moreover, a sudden anxiety was piercing her. Mademoiselle Malouzec had just arrived. She had consented, as she had but one night to spend in Paris, to go to Madame Chausey's, and passionately did Arlette question her about her father, astonished, at once uneasy at the reticence that the old maid observed in her answers, but especially at the serious expression on her countenance.

"Mademoiselle Catherine, tell us more of father. I do not, so to say, know any more of him now. His letters are scarcely notes!" Mademoiselle Malouzec hesitated, seeking how to lighten the blow that she was going to inflict on the child.

"He has been very much engaged all this time, my little girl . . . and, moreover . . . he is suffering."

"Suffering? Why do you tell me that in such

a tone?"

"But, Arlette, I am telling it to you in my ordinary tone. I cannot declare to you gleefully that your father is ill!"

She stood erect, with enlarged pupils:

"He is ill! since when?"
"For about two weeks."

"And no one has notified me? Oh! And people have let me be joyous, amuse myself,

laugh!"

Her voice broke, while her eyes, full of reproach, ran toward Madame Chausey and Madeleine, who were listening in silence, filled with pity.

"My darling, we have told you nothing," Madame Chausey remarked with effort, "because, unfortunately, you could do nothing to comfort your father. It was useless to torment you."

She shook her head:

"I would have preferred to be tormented. At least, my torment would have brought me closer to him. But, Mademoiselle Catherine, what has been the matter with him? O God! he has not contracted that malady?"

"No, it is excessive fatigue that has exhausted

him."

"But he is getting better now?"

An unconscious supplication was trembling so ardently in her voice that Mademoiselle Catherine did not dare to make her suffer more.

"He was a little better when I left him."

"A little, only! Who is with him?"

"Madame Morgane."

"Blanche also?"

"Blanche returned from Chateaulin with her mother."

"And I, his little one, am far away! I am not taking care of him! I remain in Paris as one indifferent, when he is asking for me, perhaps! And if it had not been necessary for you to come to Paris, you would not have called me back!"

She stopped short. An involuntary sign of protest had escaped from Mademoiselle Catherine, and a sudden, blinding flash passed through

Arlette's mind.

"You have come to take me! Your business in Paris was only an excuse! Then, he must be very ill. For you will conceal nothing more from me, will you? He is not . . ."

She did not finish, but halted, having become as pale as white wax. Mademoiselle Catherine

drew her tenderly to her:

"My little girl, I am concealing nothing from you. Do not be so foolish. In two days you will see for yourself that I have told you the truth, and you will be able to care for your father as much as you desire, to enjoy your meeting him again, as he himself is so happy in advance to see you do."

Arlette in silence bowed her head. Freed from the horrible fear that had for a second

passed through her thoughts, a sort of expansion took place in her, as if she had escaped from an imminent danger. But quiet did not return to her young heart, though she listened, God knows with what a supreme desire to be convinced! to Madame Chausey's and Madeleine's comforting words. In the bottom of her soul she did not believe them. For fifteen days past had they not concealed the truth from her!

And Guy, her great friend, had done the same. How bad it was in him not to have mentioned

it to her!

And so, when he came in the evening, when he was near her, isolated from the others, she could not restrain an exclamation of reproach, while palpitating all over:

"Oh! Guy, why did you not tell me that my

father was ill, since you knew it?"

"Because I dreaded seeing you at once tormented in an excessive degree, as you are at this moment," he said, in a tone of affectionate scolding. "Happily, Arlette, one may be ill, very ill indeed, and then recover."

She ardently plunged her look into Guy's to

see whether he was sincere.

"You think indeed what you say? You are sure that my father will get well? You promise me that?"

"My very dear little soul, no one in the world could make you such a promise . . . but I hope so as much as I wish it."

"You hope so only!"

She murmured these words, and two big tears glistened on her little fagged face.

"Arlette, I entreat you, do not weep!" Guy implored in an entirely changed voice. "Do not weep, I cannot bear your tears. Oh! to see you suffer and not be able to do anything for you, my poor dear little child!"

"How sad life is!" she remarked, feebly. "I would like to be already at Douarnenez, and at

the same time I am so very sorry to leave!"
"You will return. It is 'au revoir' only that

we will bid you to-morrow."

"Yes, perhaps some day or other I will return. I will, no doubt, be an old person then, for I will not again leave father; I would be too much afraid that he would become ill again while we were separated. Oh! to wait still almost two days before finding myself once more with him! How long it is, O God!"

A sort of odd feeling of jealousy arose in Guy's heart at seeing her thus dominated by the

exclusive thought of her father.

"Arlette, will you not regret us a little, us who

will regret you so much?"

"Will I regret you! Oh! every time that I think of you! But as for you, Guy, do not forget me too soon, I entreat you."

He took her in with a strange look.

"Forget you! Would that be possible for me? No one resembles you nor will take in my thoughts the place of my dear little friend. Ah! I will think of you, child, much more, perhaps, than either you or I could imagine!"

A radiant flash for a second illuminated Arlette's moist eyes. Yet she asked again, in her

delightfully childish manner:

"And it is not merely to console me that you tell me such good things?"

"Ah! it is in all sincerity, I promise you!"

And, certainly, he could promise. Never would he forget the charming little creature who, for nearly three months, had just been mingled with his life, and who had become dear to him to an extent that almost frightened him. Still much more than on the evening of her arrival, when he had caught her by surprise in tears, he felt for her an absolute devotion, a desire to bring a little light on her desolate young countenance. And he would have liked to remain yet a long while thus, near her, separated from the rest, who were chatting at the other extremity of the parlor.

The wish was quite useless; Madame Chausey, at that very moment, closed the evening by rising to accompany Mademoiselle Catherine to her apartment and called Arlette. The child bounded on hearing her. This voice broke the charm which, at Guy's words, had for an instant made her forget her anguish, and the feeling of dire

reality brutally returned to her.

The morrow, her last day in Paris, to her seemed to pass like a dream. The hours fled rapidly in the hurry of the last preparations, the last visits. Like to dream visions that are effaced, she saw fly away one by one all the sights familiar to her eyes for the past three months. And now, the moment for leaving for good all that smiling past had just struck. Standing on the threshold of her room, Arlette took it in with a supreme look of friendship, so as to carry off

its image in its most minute details. But some one called her. Quick, it was time to leave. Quite low she said:

"Adieu, my dear little room!"

And she left! The baggage had already been loaded; hastily she got into the carriage, then silently, while her friends were chatting around her, her look darkened by a flood of tears, she contemplated those streets of Paris to which she was truly attached and which, just as on the evening of her arrival, stretched out in the shadow of the winter night, starred by the yellow glimmer of the lamps.

"The station already! O God!" she mur-

mured, "it is the end!"

But all at once, with a furtive motion, she suppressed her tears, reproaching herself for them at the mere thought of her father. On the platform reigned all the bustle of departure. Was Guy there as he had promised? Her eyes wandered over the shadows that were moving quite black on the lighted floor of the station. They did not wander long. Quickly did she recognize the tall and slender form of her friend who was coming to her, carrying a bouquet of large violets with penetrating perfume.

"That they may speak to you of . . . us during the journey," he said, offering them to

her.

She bowed her head with a feeble thanks, all trembling from emotion. O God! how she would have liked to spend the last minutes all alone with him who until the end showed himself to her the most tender, the most attentive of

friends! How she would need still to hear his words so affectionate, to accept more courageously the sadness of the adieu and the anxiety that was pressing her in regard to her father! An irresistible desire! All, on the contrary, were around her, her aunt, Charlotte, Madeleine and even Pierre, accompanying her as far as the coach in which Mademoiselle Catherine, having already got in, was arranging her baggage.

"Come, Arlette, get in, get in quickly. The

time is up!" she called.

The child shivered, and burning tears rolled down her cheeks while she was receiving the kisses of her aunt and her cousins. She stopped in front of Guy. To him, her great friend, she had wished to bid adieu last. All the others she could reconcile herself to leaving. But him! Something in her was being rent in the presence of their separation.

"Adieu, Guy," she murmured; "and thanks!"

Her voice was stifled.

"Not adieu; au revoir, dear little Arlette. If you do not return to us, I will go to seek you. Au revoir . . . dear."

But this last word was spoken so low that she did not hear it. He bowed on her little hands, and he pressed his lips so closely against them, that she felt their warmth through her gloves.

"To the carriage, gentlemen, they are off."

She went in; the train shook. For the last time she met Guy's eyes full of that expression which made her heart beat. Near him Madame Chausey and her daughters made to her signs of adieu, from second to second farther off. Dominating the group, still stood out Guy's tall shadow. But the shadow also was being effaced, becoming ever smaller in the white clearness of the electric lights . . . and then she saw nothing more. The train ran into the darkness.

* * * * * * *

The night, then an interminable forenoon had passed. Each new station marked a closer approach to Douarnenez, and, through the window, Arlette saw unfolded the Breton landscapes, formerly as familiar to her view as the picturesque costumes which now almost astonished her, so unaccustomed was she to them. But she experienced no joy on finding again her Brittany that she loved so much; a single thought completely absorbed her, even to anguish, her father's illness, the gravity of which she gradually guessed at through Mademoiselle Catherine's answers.

Yet, carried away by an irresistible desire to be reassured, she anxiously asked:

"Do you think that papa will be able to come

to the station to meet us?"

Mademoiselle Catherine held back a too expressive exclamation:

"I do not think so, my little child. He is too

weak to go out."

Arlette did not insist. Beside Mademoiselle Catherine she now felt herself somewhat out of place—as she had been on her first evening in Paris, up to the moment when Guy had come to her. And then a childish fear seized her at the idea that she was going to meet again Madame

Morgane and Blanche. The life of which she had a dull remembrance was, then, going to begin over again. It would be again necessary for her, no doubt, to battle in her own defence, to hear malevolent, bitter, provoking words.

"Douarnenez! Douarnenez!" announced the

voice of an invisible employee.

In spite of Mademoiselle Malouzec's words, in spite of her own conviction, Arlette cast an eager glance on the platform. There, a few months earlier, she had separated from her father. Oh! would that he were there to receive her! But he was not waiting for her there.

Neither Madame Morgane, nor even Blanche, had come to meet her. A single friendly countenance was smiling on her, quite blooming with pleasure at her appearance, that of the captain, whose small eyes were shining more than ever

from his tanned face.

"Arlette, is it indeed you?" he said, as he opened the door. "I was beginning to think that all those Parisians would never let you come back to us! Wait till I help you to get out!"

He offered his arm to her and, lifting her like a baby, in a fatherly way he imprinted a sonorous kiss on each of her cheeks pale from fatigue

and emotion.

"Ah! my dear little child, let me look at you so as to make quite sure that it is you! What a beautiful girl you have become! Oh! how long the time has been without you, little queen! Fortunately, I often had news of you. Your father was so good as to read to me passages from your letters."

"Captain, how is father?"

Monsieur Malouzec's smiling countenance at once darkened. But he caught a passing sign

from his sister, and answered simply:

"Always much the same, my little girl; you are going to find him changed, very much changed. Very good care must be taken not to excite him. He is very weak, and the doctor recommends much quietness around him."

"It is Madame Morgane who is taking care

of him?"

"H'm, yes, she is taking care of him. But he

prefers to take care of himself alone."

"How I understand!" thought Arlette, whose heart was beating with heavy blows in her breast. But she did not articulate anything like this and only hastily answered the eager questions put to her by the good man, regarding her return journey, Paris, the Chausey family, not suspecting that he was interrogating her thus because he was afraid of her questions about the doctor's condition. But she returned to it right quickly, insatiable for those details that were breaking her heart.

"Ah! little queen, he has borne himself like a hero during these two months of epidemic! If he has not won the cross, there will be reason to despair of all justice. Douarnenez was full of patients. On the port side they were falling like flies. And he busied himself with all, at all hours of the day and night. To-day it is he

who is laid up."

The captain's coarse voice had become hoarse; he turned his head to conceal from Arlette the

sudden change on his rude countenance, and he did not see the poor wounded bird's eyes that she raised toward him.

Mademoiselle Malouzec, who had remained behind to see about the baggage, now rejoined them, and hastily they directed their steps toward the Morgane house. The pale February twilight was already falling in the grey streets in which resounded very sonorously an incessant noise of wooden shoes on the pavement; and Arlette was gradually advancing, taken again with her Breton country, enveloped by the strong sea breeze that impressed on her lips its healthy caress, and reawakened in her the somewhat forgotten impressions, suddenly throwing into a sort of distant background the great Paris that she had left. On their way they met familiar countenances. The women made exclamations, on seeing Arlette, and saluted her with a smile, with a word of welcome; small boys lisped her name, and the sailors who were moving around in the narrow little streets, of a rolling appearance, took off their hats to her, some even stopping to inquire about the doctor's health.

In the misty sky now rose more distinctly the Ploaré belfry. Then Yves Morgane's house appeared. At last! Shuddering, Arlette passed the gate. At the ringing of the door bell, a tall woman appeared on the threshold of the vestibule, Madame Morgane; behind her was detached Blanche's stout figure.

"Ah! it is you, Arlette? Well, it is none too soon!" remarked Madame Morgane, imprinting

a cold kiss on her stepdaughter's forehead. hope you have had a good time to yourself! And while we were here nursing the sick!"

"Had I known it, I would have returned long since. Why did you not write to me about it? Everybody has concealed the truth from me."

"And you do not regret it very much, in reality," she grumbled. "It is more amusing to go to a ball, to the theatre, to the shops, than to

take care of a patient!"

Arlette's eyes were flaming with indignation. But she was so dominated by the desire to embrace her father that she did not resent the harsh words that attacked her from the first minute of her return. After having exchanged a hurried kiss with Blanche, she hastily asked: "Where is father? In his office?"

"In his office! Ah! Yes, indeed! In his bedroom, which he cannot leave. Go up, he is waiting for you, my daughter, and he has left word to let you go in alone so that you give yourself up at your ease to your effusions with him. Come, hurry."

"Go, child," said Mademoiselle Malouzec, who had been listening to the colloquy with prodi-gious efforts of patience against interfering; for she knew that her words would serve only to

make Madame Morgane more bitter.

"Go quickly, my darling," she repeated. "And, especially, be very calm so as not to agitate your

father . . . will you not, little one?"

She leaned down and planted a tender kiss on the child's agitated face, whose emotion she guessed at. Haltingly Arlette went up the stairs leading to the doctor's room. She opened the door and, with a voice almost broken, she sweetly said:

"Father, it is I!"

Then wildly she ran to him and let herself drop on her knees so as the better to rest her head on the dear breast, to receive kisses like those which she gave all palpitating with tenderness, to hear the voice unheard for months murmur to her:

"My little all, my dearly beloved, my all.

Look at me, Arlette, so that I may see

again the eyes of my child. At last!"

She raised her head, and, in time, she stopped an exclamation. She had well been warned that her father had changed, but they had not told her enough. Oh! that hair quite white! That pale and hollowed face, that air of nameless fatigue! And then that shortened breath that was moving his chest!

Summoning up all her courage, she smothered the sobs that mounted to her throat, remembering that it was necessary at any cost to keep violent emotions from her father. He kept her clasped against him, broken as he was by the poignant joy that he felt on seeing her again.

"My little all," he again repeated very low,

"my only good."

With despairing passion, she murmured:

"Father, I adore you! Oh! Why did you so long leave me afar from you?"

"Because it was necessary, my dearly beloved.

I did not want to risk seeing you fall sick."

"And during that time you exhausted yourself

for others. If I had been near you, I would have kept you from thus giving all your strength, and to-day you would not be ill yourself!"

"I am going to be better soon, my Arlette," he remarked, gently, with a strange smile that was lost in the twilight shadow. I will not suf-

fer much longer."

Scarcely did she hear his words, such possession did fear take of her, as the forerunner of an inevitable misfortune, whilst she greedily scanned her father's ravaged countenance. With torturing anguish she tried to persuade herself that he would not take long to recover; but, like a knell, a thought was budding in her heart:

"He is very ill. Can he ever become what he

was of old?"

And with an irresistible feeling of sorrow she murmured:

"Oh! father, why did I go away? Why did

I leave you?"

"Never regret having gone. You understand, my dearly beloved? Regret nothing. I desired that it be so . . . and all is well . . . all will be well by the grace of the God to whom you pray with so much faith, and to whom I have become reconciled."

He stopped for a moment; then, with a faint smile, ceasing to caress the child's hair, he said:

"We are concerning ourselves only with me, and yet I have a very great desire to hear my little girl speak to me of her journey, of those who received and spoiled her, beginning with her Cousin Guy, her great friend. Is it not true, darling?"

She felt a slight shudder at the mention of Guy's name, and in her memory he arose suddenly, his look fixed on her with the expression which she loved so much.

"Oh! yes, father, he was a true friend to me." She stopped. The door opened before the

heavy form of Blanche, who declared:

"Mamma sends word to you, Arlette, to come and look after your baggage. She asks, father,

whether you need anything."

"I need only to listen to the stories of my little traveler and to keep her by my side, to be quite certain that she has really returned," he said, with his melancholy smile. "Go quickly, Arlette, do what your mother desires, and come back to me."

Oh! yes, let her come back quickly! For weeks and weeks past had he not been deprived of her? And now, like one famished, he could not be satiated with contemplating her in all her young splendor, with meeting her eyes full of tenderness, with receiving the caress of her voice.

In obedience to him, she went up to her room, cold and gloomy under the dying light of that declining day, where nothing showed that her presence was expected—save the fastidious order which reigned there. And she had a fugitive vision of her room in Paris such as she had seen it on the evening of her arrival, softly lighted by the rosy shimmer of the lamp, scenting distinctly of violets.

Oh! the violets! Those which Guy had given to her the evening before were dead now, all withered. And he, her friend, was far from her, so far that it suddenly seemed to her that never again could they meet. Then a deep sense of isolation beat down upon her, shaking her with restrained sobs, whilst, her hands clasped in an appealing posture, she murmured:
"Oh! Guy, do not abandon me!
and I am so unhappy!"

He is so ill,

CHAPTER XII.

GUY would have been very much astonished if any one had told him a few weeks earlier that little Arlette Morgane's departure would leave in his life such a void as that which he felt. But at first, irritated against himself on account of this unexpected impression, he had pretended to deny its existence. After a few days, however, he had indeed to acknowledge that his daily visits to his sister to him seemed robbed of their charm now that his arrival there was no longer welcomed by a smile and a look the memory of which had become a sort of haunting to him.

Why, then, had she thus taken possession of him, the skeptical and over-sated clubman, heedless, ever careful to escape the lightest yoke? What had she done to leave in him that irresistible desire to hear her spoken of? Why from afar did she hold him thus, filling his soul with a mysterious and emotional tenderness for her, with a desire to protect her, at that moment especially when he knew her to be sad and uneasy? Had she, then, intoxicated him by the mere perfume of her fresh youth? Never, moreover, would he have imagined that he could await with almost painful anxiety the news that Madame Chausey and her daughters received from her, with that fear of learning that the dreaded blow had stricken down her father.

And a time came when it was more than a week since she had written, not even answering the letters sent to her by Madame Chausey, who was very uneasy at her silence. Guy, glancing at the calendar lying on his desk, counted the days. Twelve had elapsed without his knowing anything more of her. What was happening? Was she suffering in her turn? Or rather had Madame Morgane thought it well to break off her stepdaughter's correspondence with the family that she had at Paris? Indeed Guy no longer knew what to imagine.

Perhaps that very day, at last, Madame Chausey had received a letter. Three o'clock! There was yet a slight chance of finding his sister at

home.

But when he reached the threshold of her house and asked whether she was receiving, he learned that she was at the Ice Palace with Madeleine, and had left word that she would be found there if he came.

At the Ice Palace! What pleasant afternoons he had spent there with Arlette! and, on entering it to seek his sister, there suddenly came back vividly to his memory the image of the laughing child, so pretty, planted on her skates, her fine form outlined by the dark winter costume. The decorations had remained the same; the same elegant couples were gliding on the ice with its bluish reflections, but Guy did not look at them; he preferred to see again in his thoughts little Arlette's eyes and delighted smile when he used to draw her along on the ice, and she so light that he did not even feel the touch of her

slight body. What a joy in living then escaped from her whole young being!

"There! Pazanne . . . you are not skat-

ing?"

"No, not to-day."

Carelessly he clasped the friendly hand stretched toward him.

"You have come as a spectator? Well, you will not get weary. There is over there a bevy of pretty women, beginning with Mademoiselle d'Estève. What! Are you no longer on the list of her adorers? Pazanne, my old boy, you are becoming inconstant."

He shrugged his shoulders and asked:

"Have you seen my sister?"

"Madame Chausey is down there near Mademoiselle d'Estève, in a group of relatives, and she is waiting for the young folks to end an evolution."

Guy spoke a hurried thanks; then, manœuvering among the spectators, he joined his sister. She had many around her, and he had to perform many acts of politeness before he could put to her the question that was besetting him:

"Have you any news from Douarnenez?"

"No, none yet. It is incredible! Arlette cannot have forgotten us. I am very much afraid that her father is very ill."

"Whose father?" Madame d'Estève asked, in

a tone of levity.

"The father of my young niece, Arlette Morgane."

"Oh! indeed, he is ill! What ails him?"

"A heart trouble, very serious."

"Indeed? What a pity! That little Arlette was adorable. And so pleasant! How the days follow one another and are so unlike to us poor mortals!"

And with this remark Madame d'Estève resumed babbling with those around her, whilst Guy was taking leave, mutely irritated at those frivolous triflings, but yet like so many others, to which he had listened without any impatience; but to-day he found them hateful. What obscure change, then, was taking place in him, bringing into life the disdain, which had become almost contempt, that he had for his life of ease, condemned one evening with so much unconscious severity by a candid little girl?

"What! you are going already? Really?"

He turned his head. It was Jeanne d'Estève, the beautiful heiress whom his sister wished to see him marry.

"You are really going?"

"Yes, I cannot remain to-day."

Slowly she said, in an almost caressing voice:

"Even if I entreated you to do it?"

"You will be very generous, if you do not ask it of me, so as to save me the regret of not being able to oblige you."

She bit her lips, which became even much

more intensely red.

"A very clever answer you have made, and one worthy of the most courteous of men! But, between ourselves, you know that you are making yourself far from amiable!"

"You are ever so much too good to take the

trouble to so remark."

"Much more than you deserve."

"That is true."

She came a little closer to him, and, with a strange smile, bantering and irritating, she continued, her dark eyes seeking those of Guy:

"Monsieur de Pazanne, you have had the appearance of a soul in pain for some time past. Now, you ought to know the country of souls in pain."

"It is Paris . . . and properly so!"

"Not at all! It is Brittany. There you ought to live. You should look up young Arlette, who has to me all the appearance of seeming to be wanting to you! That is understood. Children always leave a void when they go away!"

In his turn he looked at her straight in the eyes, and, having become bantering on his part,

he said carelessly:

"I do not know why you thus hold on to making a baby of Arlette. She had all the reason that one is justified in asking of a very young girl steeped in delightful ignorance."

"And made thus so as to attract an over-sated

man?"

"I imagine that indeed it might be thus," he remarked, fully master of himself.

"You imagine? Well, as for me, I am sure that . . ."

"What?"

She finished boldly, with her same smile:

"That you are on your way to falling in love . . . as much as a collegian can do so with his cousin."

He made a profound bow, and, ever in a tone of silent bantering, he concluded with a smile:

"I would that you were a good prophet, for in this way I would find myself considerably reju-

venated."

"Bah! you are not yet of an age so advanced that youth seems to you desirable to that extent. You are decidedly in a gloomy mood to-day. Au revoir! Are you going to the De Montys to-morrow?"

"Yes. And you?"

"Ah! we are, you may depend on it!"

Guy imperceptibly hesitated; then, bowing, he asked:

"May I beg the favor of one of your first waltzes?"

"I ought to answer no, seeing how far from gallant you are to-day. But, as you have said, I

am ever so very good. Au revoir!"

She extended to him her pretty hand, moulded by the Swede glove. He saluted it very low and then retired, while she glided again on the ice.

He went away irritated at himself on account of that invitation which he had just given without having any desire to see it accepted, impelled merely by his habitual courtesy as a man of the world.

Outside a light penetrating rain was falling. Without taking any concern about it, he went on straight ahead of him, dreamily, passing judgment again with pitiless severity on the frivolity of his too easy life, beset at the same time by the recollection of Jeanne d'Estève's words, whom

he wished to shun, and by the uneasiness that was torturing him in regard to Arlette.

When he returned home his valet's first word was to announce that a dispatch had come for him.

"A dispatch?"

"Yes, sir, and if I had known where the gentleman was, I would have brought it to him."

"All right. Give it."

He was indeed in the habit of receiving dispatches; yet he did not hesitate for a second as to where this one came from. He tore open the envelope and read:

"My father died this morning. Come if you can, I beg of you. "ARLETTE."

So the blow had fallen. The child was an orphan! And infinite compassion moved Guy's heart. In that appeal which came to him across the distance he saw the wild fancy of a young creature stricken straight in the heart by a suffering for which he could do nothing, of which no human power could relieve her and under which he pictured her to himself as crushed.

"My poor little Arlette, my precious child!" he murmured, once more reading the few words

of the dispatch.

The idea that she was suffering was unendurable to him; but at the same time an impression of sweetness, almost of joy, penetrated his soul because in her distress she had called him, sure that he would come. Hurriedly he consulted the railroad time-table.

Then he thought:

"I must notify Louise, in case she has got no word. I have barely time before taking the

night train."

And, having given orders for his baggage to be ready at the appointed hour, he threw himself into a carriage. Madame Chausey had just returned. As soon as her brother was announced, she appeared, with emotion on her countenance, and said immediately:

"Do you know? On arriving I have just found a dispatch. Poor Yves Morgane succumbed this morning. What a blow it must be to Arlette! I expected this death, and yet I am

upset by it."

"I have just learned of it myself, and I leave

this evening."

"You leave? For where?"
"For Douarnenez, naturally."

She looked at her brother with astonishment. The idea had not even most faintly occurred to her that he could think of undertaking such a journey.

"But, Guy, do you think of doing so?"

"Yes, I think of it. I think that we cannot remain very much at ease in our Paris when a child who has become somewhat our own, whom we say we love, has become the victim of a sorrow like that which she must be now enduring. And as the trip from Paris to Douarnenez would be too fatiguing for you, and as neither Charlotte nor Pierre can undertake it, I will go, I who have but too much time to lose."

There was in Guy's tone an unwonted bitter-

ness that struck Madame Chausey.

"Guy, what is the matter? Something ails you. Jeanne d'Estève noticed it a little while

ago, and spoke to me about it later."

"Oh! I entreat you, Louise, let us drop Mademoiselle d'Estève. It is a real bother thus incessantly to hear her spoken of. On my part I would be very grateful to her not to exercise her imagination on my account. What do you think is the matter with me? Nothing . . . but the constant regret at having my place marked out among the useless ones of the world, among those who have only the trouble of living! It is true that at certain times this trouble may count! But this is hardly the moment to give ourselves up to philosophical or other considerations. Time is pressing, Louise, au revoir."

Ever serious, Madame Chausey asked: "Will you remain long at Douarnenez?"

"I do not think so . . . unless, which is very improbable, I can, either in your name or

my own, be of some service to Arlette."

She did not insist and in her turn said "au revoir." She felt that her brother was right in going, that his course was quite natural; but at the same time a vague regret was agitating her at his undertaking that journey. Yet, strange to say, not for an instant did the idea occur to her that Guy could have for Arlette more than a mere brotherly interest, to such an extent in her eyes was her niece still a mere child. She did not suspect when, on retiring to sleep that very evening, she thought that her brother was rolling toward Douarnenez, that impatience to arrive was burning him, that he felt falling on his very

heart the tears of despair that the child was shedding down there all alone, for having lost

the father whom she adored.

All night Guy de Pazanne journeyed thus; but only in the middle of next day did he reach Douarnenez. The station was almost deserted. that season tourists did not come, and the station master looked at him with some astonishment. He took no notice of this, and hastily struck out into the country by that same road which he had traversed for the first time when Arlette was journeying briskly in front of him, so full of laughter in her rosy dress. How far that warm sunny summer day had flown! A sharp wind was now raising the grey waves which he saw in the misty distance, and no joyous group was advancing in front of him. He met only women in white bonnets who looked back after him. distance children were following him, whispering in their Breton tongue, and, seeing him direct his course toward Doctor Morgane's house, they understood and ceased to laugh for a moment. Guy arrived. He recognized the house, the small stone steps, the garden in which some early buds had put spots of green on the trees. The door was wide open.

When he approached, neighboring women who were chatting in a subdued tone in front of the steps, moved aside, exposing to view on the threshold a tall woman in black, Madame Morgane herself. And Guy then saw that it had not yet occurred to him that Yves Morgane had left a widow and other children besides Arlette.

There was scarcely any visible trace of sorrow

on her features, the expression of which was even more imperious than ordinarily. She scanned the young man, and asked in a harsh tone, without recognizing him:

"You wish, sir?"

Guy bowed with slightly haughty ease.

"Allow me, madam, to present myself again to you, Guy de Pazanne."

"Oh! yes, I remember, Arlette's cousin."

Coldly he continued:

"We received the dispatch announcing the . . . sad news, and I have come to express to you the sympathy of all of us for you in your

misfortune, for that of Arlette."

She took in the young man with a piercing glance. If her husband's death had awakened some recollection in her icy soul, at that moment certainly she no longer felt but a mute irritation at Guy de Pazanne's unexpected arrival, because, with the clear-sightedness of her jealousy, she at once guessed that he was at Douarnenez, not on her account, nor on account of her children, but on Arlette's account only! And in the same haughty tone she answered:

"It was very good of you, sir, to have come from Paris to assist at the mourning for my husband, whose death will be a great misfortune to many. The funeral service takes place to-mor-

row."

It was almost a dismissal that was given to him.

But Guy, without departing from his politeness, said coldly, in a very clear tone:

"I thank you, madam, for deigning to give me

notice, and I would, moreover, be very grateful to you if you would tell me whether I can see

my Cousin Arlette."

"My God, I know not what she will do. Certainly, since you have put yourself out of your way on her account, it would indeed be as little as she could do to thank you for it. But she is such a peculiar creature that perhaps she will not want to see you! One would really think that she alone is stricken by my husband's death. The living no longer exist for her. It is impossible to tear her away from beside her father's bed. I have used my authority in vain. She is there looking at him without even weeping like her sister, with fixed eyes, as if she were really insane. But I will go and tell her that you are here and that she must come down."

"I entreat you, madam, not to do anything of the sort. Be so kind as merely to tell her of my arrival. She will receive me if she so desires."

Madame Morgane took on once more a strange look in which there was not an atom of goodness.

"What ceremonies for a child! Go and find her, which will be much more simple. Only excuse me if I do not show you up. . . . I have much troublesome business on hand to-day."

And she called:

"Corentin! Corentin!"

A door opened, and the young boy appeared. His fat face was begrimed with tears, and Guy, at once feeling sympathy for him, affectionately clasped his heavy collegian hands. In silence Corentin listened to his mother's order and went

up ahead of Guy, who followed him with his heart beating heavily in his broad breast.

"Here!" he said in a smothered tone.

Then, very low, supplicating and confused, he

quickly concluded:

"Be very good to Arlette, won't you! She is so unhappy! Yves and I can do nothing to console her, even in the least!"

And, without waiting for a word from Guy

and frightened at his boldness, he fled.

Candles were starring the almost dark room in which poor Yves Morgane had suffered so many painful hours. Now infinite peace had fallen on him. At the foot of the bed, crushed on the

floor, a spare form was visible.

At the noise made by the door Arlette did not even turn her head. She remained in her same place, her eyes fixed on her father's marble countenance, stolidly unconscious of what was going on around her. Then Guy called almost low, his voice vibrating with infinite and tender pity:

"Arlette, here I am, Arlette!"

Did she recognize his voice? Was she merely snatched from her torpor? She turned around a little. He had remained in the doorway, his tall figure darkly outlined.

"Guy! Oh! My God! At last, there you

are!"

She stood up, and, thrown as if by the spring of a child in distress, she came and flung herself into Guy's arms, in which he enveloped her. And she remained there without a word, without a thought, without tears, broken-hearted.

"Arlette, my poor dear little child!" he mur-

mured, feeling what need she had at that moment of having affection bestowed on her.

Lowly she said in a tone of passionate despair: "Guy, I have lost him! Is it possible that he can no longer speak to me, embrace me, listen to me, that he no longer feels my kisses? Guy, I cannot bear that! It is too horrible! I prefer to die with him! Oh! how I would like to die!"

She spoke in a low and halting tone. By the glimmer of the candles he noticed her poor little hollowed face from which her dry eyes were flaming, further enlarged by a sort of fright in the presence of inexorable misfortune, and, again, he repeated with extreme tenderness:

"Arlette, my very dear little friend!"

Her look lost a little of its fixedness. But, clasping Guy's hand, she resumed in the same tone of wild sorrow:

"I was a bad child. I left him. I was able to be satisfied and pleasant afar from him. The good God has punished me. He did not listen to me when I entreated Him to make him well. He has taken him from me . . . forever! And I yesterday morning thought him better! All here seemed to think as I did, though they say to-day that it was the end. I guessed at nothing. He still called me 'Arlette!' and I did not understand that it was for the last time! Now no one will any longer give me my name—as he said it! And I deserved this."

She shuddered; her voice was stifled in her throat.

"I entreat you," remarked Guy, speaking to her very gently as to a child, whose anguish one wishes to assuage, "do not make such reproaches against yourself! I swear to you, I who have seen your poor father's letters to my sister, that you realized his very desire by remaining with us. Rest assured also, my dear little child, that you will again hear your name pronounced by . . . those who love you, as your father said.

Believe me, Arlette!"

Was there, then, in Guy's tone anything of the tone of Yves Morgane, speaking to his so much loved child? On hearing it she was moved in every fibre; and then, all of a sudden, tears, the first since her misfortune, trickled down her white cheeks, while a sob rent her throat. Then, it was as if the seal placed on her sorrow had been suddenly broken. She began to sob wildly, wringing her little hands, from anguish. Quite low she spoke to her father, giving him the tender names which she lavished on him still the day before, but too much broken to go again and throw herself at the foot of the bed, there to remain with her eyes lost, fixed on the dear face that was no longer living. In the midst of her suffering she felt, however, a sweetness in feeling him, her Guy, near her, holding in his hands her icy hand, hearing him speak to her of her father with emotional sympathy, listening to the words of affection that made her distress less frightful and that showed her to what extent she was understood by her friend.

No more than her was he conscious of how time was passing, and he was startled at the noise made by the door as Madame Morgane opened it, followed by Mademoiselle Catherine, as white as the cap that formed a nimbus to her brow. Behind her Corentin had glided into the room, and to his father's pillow. From the threshold Madame Morgane took in at a glance the group

formed by her stepdaughter and Guy.

"Monsieur de Pazanne," she remarked, in a low voice to the young man, pointing out to him the old maid kneeling at the bedside, "Mademoiselle Catherine desires to offer you hospitality. I think Arlette would like to restore you to liberty."

Did Mademoiselle Malouzec hear? All at once she arose, making a sign to the young man to follow her out. But Arlette had seen her movement, and, having become more pale than ever,

she murmured suppliantly:

"Oh! Guy, you will come back?"
"Yes, my darling, I will return."

"Why are you leaving? It is horrible when

you are not here!"

"Because Madame Morgane would come to find . . . my presence here indiscreet. But

He did not finish. He had just once more met Madame Morgane's piercing eyes fixed on Arlette with an expression so severe that, in the poor little one's very interest, he understood that he ought to master the temptation which urged him to remain with her as long as his presence would do her good.

But he had a horror of abandoning her thus all alone in that death chamber, and entreatingly he asked her to allow herself to be taken away for a little while by Mademoiselle Catherine. Immediately she shook her head, with her thin face become fierce:

"No, I will not leave him. Must I not to-

morrow leave him forever?"

Her voice seemed as if a breath escaping from her blanched lips, and she had the appearance of being so exhausted that Mademoiselle Catherine murmured to Guy:

"She can stand no more of it. If you have any influence over her, use it to bring her away from this room. You will perhaps succeed better

than I in persuading her."

He approached the child, who was pale as a

young corpse.

"You will come back, Arlette; but it is necessary for you to go and take a little rest," he resumed, in that tone which had such empire over her. "Come so that you may have strength to remain until the end beside your poor father, else to-morrow you will no longer be able to see him, you will be ill."

In her look, which had become dry again, she had an expression of unspeakable suffering; then,

shutting her eyes, she murmured:

"Oh! to-morrow!"

And, without a word more, she slipped inertly into Guy's arms, open to clasp her.

CHAPTER XIII.

Now Yves Morgane was resting from life in the supreme peace of a small Breton cemetery, and Guy was returning toward Paris. But Madame Morgane had judged with so much malevolence his affection for Arlette and the confident resignation with which she responded to it, that, so as not to injure the child, he had resigned himself to leaving Douarnenez without waiting, as he had wished, for the examination of Yves Morgane's papers to throw some light on Arlette's future condition. Mademoiselle Catherine herself had warmly advised him to do this, and he knew that he could depend on her good sense and foresight.

Accordingly he had left once the funeral ceremonies in church and cemetery were over. The night train was carrying him toward Paris, alone in his coach, haunted by the vision of a pale little face like that of a wax virgin, with two large eyes shining with feverish brilliancy, eyes that he had known when sparkling with gayety, and which he could no longer see again but with their expression of dark and passionate sorrow, and full at the same time of every sort of mysterious dread in the presence of that be-

yond seen close at hand for the first time.

But at that moment especially he had living in all his being the last and poignant image that he carried away of her, when, at the very moment that he was going to leave, exasperated at having had to address his parting adieu to her under Madame Morgane's malevolent eye, she had come to Mademoiselle Malouzec's, who had been driven wild by the violent scene just created by the girl's stepmother. Brutally had Madame Morgane, who was irritated by the general interest shown in Arlette, thrown in her face, with assertion of her rights over her, the revelation of the poverty that had been bequeathed to her by her father and that had delivered her over to the charity of those around her; and the child, revolting against the pitiless words that were hurled at her misfortune, had fled and come to seek a refuge with her old friends—cast also toward their house by the instinctive hope that Guy would still be there. And as for him, she was sure that he would not allow her to be tortured so any more!

He was still there, and, with tender and compassionate authority, he had striven to calm the despairing child, who repeated to him in a low

voice, as if in complaint:

"Oh! Guy, why do you leave?"

And why, after all, had he left, after having promised her, it is true, to return soon? Now a keen regret was stinging him at the mere thought that, if he had wished, he could have yet at that moment been down there with the beloved little one, to surround her with that atmosphere of affection which alone would somewhat dull her despairing grief.

"But I am a fool to have left," he grumbled

quite low. "I should have remained at no matter what cost, without even disturbing myself as to Madame Morgane's existence! I should have remained near her . . . or rather carried her off!"

Yes, carrried her off! To be able to hear her, to speak to her, to meet her childish look, so pure and so passionate! Oh! to have her at that minute, confidently nestling by his side, so that he could still murmur to her the words that one has for cherished beings when they are suf-

fering.

He startled at this mere regret, and then suddenly the truth, from whose presence he had been shrinking for weeks, appeared to him in full light—the light that was illuminating the Promised Land. He, the bantering and oversated clubman, loved with the best of himself that child whom chance had thrown into his life and who seemed to have entered there never to leave again. Could he dissemble this to himself any longer? At that moment the aspiration of his whole being was to see her, to find her again, to keep her so as never again to lose her. And the irresistible avowal sprang from his lips:

"I love her as I have loved no woman!"

Mechanically he arose and took a few steps in the coach, upset by the blinding brilliance of that revelation which all at once delighted and frightened him. To love Arlette! For weeks past he had been unavowedly conscious of it, in the presence of the void left in him by her departure from Paris, in the presence of his keen need of hearing her spoken of, in the presence of the obscure joy that had seized him at the mere thought of seeing her again at Douarnenez,

whither she was calling him.

But after that? Did he love her enough to offer to her his whole life, to go as far as marriage, which he had always dreaded? His keen thought was rummaging in his memory, calling up therefrom visages of young ladies whom his sister had wished to see him marry—and, more attractive than most of them, the beautiful Jeanne d'Estève. Well, neither the one nor the other had had over him an atom of the power with which Arlette possessed him, by the mere influence of her real youth, of her delightful ignorance, of her freshness of mind and soul which he had not met in any other, and whose unknown charm he had tasted from the moment of their first meeting. Oh! to make her his own, to guard her against the miseries that come from men, to give her all his love and to receive in exchange from her the gift of her young heart, which no one—her father excepted—had ever possessed!

It was a nameless dream that he was having there, so exquisite that he was afraid of it, hesitating to let himself be enveloped by the morning brightness that had suddenly risen on his life. A dull fear, moreover, was invading him lest he was yielding to a dilettante fancy by going toward that little creature so new who for that very reason was so strangely attracting him, and, from a sort of scruple of conscience, he mur-

mured:

"I will await the captain's letter concerning

Arlette's position, before reaching any decision;

especially so as to speak to Louise."

But within himself already he knew that an hour would come when, his last hesitations being overcome, he would come, ever so happy at her defeat, to entreat the beloved little one to en-

trust her young life to him.

Longer than he had foreseen did he await the letter which must, according to his will, decide his destiny. He waited a long two weeks, during which he could give an account to himself of what the child had become to him. stranger, he now moved in his customary surroundings, all the interest of his existence tending toward the little corner of Brittany where she lived, and the idea that she was suffering there without his doing anything for her became to him the more intolerable as the days passed. Only had he known anything of her from the captain's business letters, like him a member of the family council, from the brief notes, all palpitating with sobs, which she had written to Madame Chausey and Madeleine.

At last, one morning, in his mail, he noticed a letter the large writing on which had a rather awkward appearance, and, pushing all the others aside, he opened it. It was indeed that for which he had longed so much, but written by Mademoiselle Catherine, who, with her ordinary frankness, explained to him at once why she was

his correspondent on this occasion.

"DEAR SIR:

"Here, at last, the child's affairs are

somewhat cleared up; and I preferred to come and speak of them to you myself, for there are certain questions which women—without meaning any offence to my brother—treat better than do men, when sentiment is to be mixed up with them. In the first place, you will see in the papers hereunto annexed that the child to-day has scarcely more than five hundred francs in-All the rest was swallowed up in the Le Goanec failure. Madame Morgane knows it now; and, my word for it, I am ready to believe that she is triumphant over it! She had offered to keep Arlette in her house, but on terms so big with threats regarding the happiness and even the peace of the little one, that we rejected her proposals, my brother and I thus conforming with her poor father's desire, as he exacted that she should remain with us; I may add on my own account, provided no better future presents itself for her. Now, dear sir, as you and Madame Chausey represent the child's family, we have thought that we ought to have your consent to install her with us, for good, as our daughter. This would be to us a joy that we had never dreamed of. It was, I repeat to you, the doctor's own desire; for he wished that she continue to lead the very simple life to which she has been accustomed and which, probably, will remain hers.

"Perhaps your sister, who is very good, would think of taking the child into her house? Well, I have reflected on this prospect; I have spoken of it to my brother, and, before my conscience, I tell you that this solution would not seem to me too good for Arlette, who, after having tasted of your splendor, would perhaps find it difficult to become accustomed to the very modest home which she will perforce have if she gets married. For I do not entertain any illusions; men of means marry only women who have means like themselves. At Douarnenez, I hope, the child will find some good young man who will be satisfied with the small fortune that we will assure to her, and I am firmly convinced that she will be able to be as happy as her father desired. You may indeed rest assured, sir, as may also Madame Chausey, that we will not allow her to forget her Paris family. But, trust to my old experience, it is better that she does not leave her country; it would be preferable—I am going to be quite frank—that she does not become too much attached to you, Monsieur Guy, and that her girlish imagination have not the opportunity to attach an importance that does not exist to the brotherly interest that you have been so good as to take in her.

"That, sir, is all that I had to say to you. I hope that you will share our way of judging and see in it only a proof of the extreme affection

that we have for dear little Arlette."

Guy let the letter fall and smiled.

"No, dear Mademoiselle Catherine, I do not share in your way of thinking. You are good and generous; but I will not thus abandon my treasure to you."

A great calm suddenly came about in him, his hesitancy being carried away by the breath of hope that was passing over him. He murmured:

"I will marry Arlette."

And his own words resounded in his ear as a

promise of happiness.

Then all at once he resolved to speak to Madame Chausey. Until that moment, he had awaited, knowing the deception that he was practicing on her by secretly wishing to make Arlette his wife, when she had long dreamed for him a brilliant marriage as the world goes.

In the forenoon he was sure to find her alone.

Indeed, she was writing in her little parlor, and uttered an exclamation of pleasure on seeing him:

"Guy! what a pleasant surprise! You have been almost invisible this week. What has become of you, then?"

He smiled, and Madame Chausey was struck

at the pleasant outburst of that smile.

"Nothing has become of me. I have been resting from my journey to Brittany."

"Have you had letters from Douarnenez?"

"Yes, this very morning. I have received a letter from Mademoiselle Catherine."

"Who tells you that . . ."

"That Arlette's position is indeed such as we feared. Yves Morgane died a ruined man, and

Arlette remains without any fortune."

Madame Chausey took in her brother with a glance of surprise. How could he, loving Arlette as he did, look calmly on that young girl's difficult position?

"Guy, it is very sad! What is going to be-

come of the poor little one?"

"Mademoiselle Catherine and the captain ask

us—as representatives of the family—to leave her with them. They would adopt her in some way or other. But Arlette, I hope, will not need to take advantage of their generosity."

Madame Chausey did not answer all at once;

then slowly she said:

"Indeed, she can hardly remain in their charge, any more than in that of her odious stepmother. It seems to me that her true place is with us. Is that not your opinion?"

He bowed and embraced his sister on the hair, as he did at the time when he was a very caress-

ing little boy:

"Thanks for having guessed, my darling.

Thanks for your very thought."

"Which is quite natural. For, on the whole, there is question of a charming little girl whom all of us love. For my part, moreover, I will gain much by her presence, since she will be a companion to me when Madeleine in her turn gets married. Then you say that the poor little one no longer has anything in the shape of fortune?"

"Nothing, almost."

And a joy arose in him at the idea that he would give her that fortune which she did not have; that, thanks to him, she would not know the bitterness of dependent conditions.

His sister's voice startled him.

"Guy, what are you thinking of?"

"Of all sorts of very serious things. Tell me, Louise, are you deeply interested in Arlette? You are attached to her, sincerely?"

"Very much attached" she repeated, in sur-

prise.

"You are interested in her future?"

"Yes, certainly. I will do whatever I can to prepare to make it as happy for her as possible. I will keep her close to me until the moment when I shall have the opportunity to get her comfortably married. I hope indeed that I will succeed in discovering for her a party better than him whom Madame Harvet found."

There was a brief silence; then Guy's voice

rose gravely:

"I really think, Louise, that the best thing for Arlette would be to get her married; only it is useless for you to look for a party for her."

"Because?"

"Because, if Arlette consents, she will become my wife."

In a genuine fit of amazement Madame Chau-

sey looked at her brother:

"Your wife! Arlette become your wife! Let us see, Guy, whether you are only joking!"

"Do I look so?"

"It cannot really be that you are thinking of marrying Arlette!"

"And why not?"

"Because she is a child, because she is neither in your position, nor in your set, nor . . ."

"Louise, I entreat you, be silent. Surprise keeps you from measuring your words, and they are not such as I would like to listen to, at this moment especially."

Guy's tone was so positive that Madame Chausey felt she found herself in the presence of a

man of firm resolve.

"Then, Guy, whence came such an idea to

you? Why do you want to marry Arlette? Why?"

A smile distended Guy's features.

"Because I am as weak and as selfish as all other men and ardently desire to be happy; because I know that I can be so through Arlette

only, whom I love."

"You love Arlette? You love her? Really? To sacrifice to her your liberty of which you were so jealous? Come, now! You think you love her, that is all. She amused you at first. You found her attractive on account of her unaffectedness, because she did not resemble the women whom you had been in the habit of meeting. Then, you became still more attached to her, seeing her suffer. You have had pity on her, knowing her to be poor. But those are not sufficient reasons for breaking up your whole future."

Madame Chausey's lips were trembling with emotion, and she stopped, her voice smothered, without turning her eyes from her brother's serious countenance.

"I should have thought, on the contrary, Louise, that those were great reasons. But you are mistaken in supposing that I desire to make Arlette my wife from compassion. I am neither a saint nor a hero, and from charity I would not feel myself capable of sacrificing my life to a child whom I merely pitied. I wish to marry Arlette because she is infinitely dear to me, because she is a realization of my dream, namely, to marry a genuinely candid young girl, who is ignorant of the ugly phases of our poor human

nature, of whom I will be the first master, whose perfectly white soul no man has stained!"

"Then it is from dilettantism that you want to marry her?" she interrupted, in the same

violent and restrained tone.

"I have been afraid of it for a moment. Now I am sure that I am not. I know too well to what extent I am absolutely devoted to her and how precious her happiness is to me. If I told you, Louise, that I wished to become Jeanne d'Estève's husband, you would not rise up in the same way against my plan!"

"Naturally! You would be making a suitable marriage! You would be marrying a woman belonging to the same social set as yourself, the

same education, the same fortune."

A dull exclamation escaped from Guy:

"Ah! there at last is frankly admitted the reason for your opposition! So to you also, Louise, matrimony is in reality a matter of money. So that the purse of each of the betrothed is well filled, all that you find to be wished for is accomplished. If I were to make my wife of no matter what parlor doll, were she even already an abominably experienced coquette, but in return well dowried, you would bow in delight and would be the first to urge me to come to conclusions in the matter. And if you reject Arlette, whom you said you love and wish to treat as your daughter, it is only because she is not an heiress!"

"Guy, you are severe!" interrupted Madame Chausey, whose eyes had become filled with

tears.

There was much truth in her brother's words; but she had her excuse. Toward him she had always had a motherly ambition; and here he was shutting out from himself every chance of a brilliant future by pretending to devote his life to a fortuneless child, delightful, she acknowledged, but no more so than many others who could have come to him, with their little hands

full of gold.

"Guy, you are very severe! for, if you are playing your part while dreaming only of your affection for Arlette, I myself am in mine when reminding you that, married to a woman without any dowry, you will have to give up a large part of your pleasure. Your fortune is considerable, now that you are alone in using it; it will be much less on the day when you will have charge of a wife and children. Take care, then, when you no longer see things through your . . . passion, lest you regret your resolve of to-day!"

While listening to his sister he had been walking across the room. When she became silent he stopped in front of her, his features marked

with proud energy:

"What you have been saying to me I know, Louise. But, thank God, I am not enough of a coward to find any reason for hesitation therein. Joyfully do I accept this new life which you announce to me; joyfully I repeat it to you, since it will bring to me the obligation of making an end of my life of laziness, which I despised and which, however, I had the weakness to continue to lead. Thanks to Arlette, I will raise myself

in my own esteem, as, from love of her, I will work! I will secure some occupation or other."

Tears were now flowing down Madame Chausey's pale cheeks. Guy saw them, and his irritation came to an end. Briskly he drew near to her and knelt beside his sister, drawing Madame

Chausey's hands into his own.

"Louise," he gently remarked, "be as good as you used to be, when you were not merely a sister to me, but a very tender mother, who thought only of seeing me happy. Accept with your heart, without making calculations of reason and of worldly wisdom, the dear little bride whom I wish to take to myself. Leave me to seek my happiness where I am certain that it is. You would not like to see one of your daughters tormented to no purpose. Do not set yourself up against me, my dear, my best friend."

He spoke to her in the same tone as of old, low and tender, when he was a child and wanted to obtain from her the greatest favor in her giving. Then, suddenly overcome, she laid her hand on that man's head raised toward her, in the same manner she formerly had toward him as a little boy, and their looks met, full of the invincible affection that they had for each other. In spite of everything, even the crumbling of her dreams, she was proud that he thus despised the question of interest to enter into a marriage

merely of love.

"I wish what you wish, Guy," she remarked, slowly. "But yet, grant me one thing. Wait a few days more before speaking to Arlette. Re-

flect, so as to be quite sure of yourself. It is for her happiness as well as for yours."

He hesitated. To wait! Would he ever have

the courage to do so?

"Guy, I entreat you!" Madame Chausey repeated.

He smiled at his sister's air of entreaty, and

then said:

"Be it so, since you so desire, my dear big sister, I will delay the moment of entering into the Promised Land."

CHAPTER XIV.

On leaving, Guy had said to Arlette that he would come back, and she was waiting for him confidently. Yet he was very slow in returning! Days and days had fled since he had left her; and when she thought of those days, and of the latest especially that she had spent under Madame Morgane's tutelage, after her father's death, she had the impression of having lived in a horrible At last, thank God, she now felt nightmare. around her the atmosphere of warm affection with which the captain and Mademoiselle Catherine strove to surround her, for they were ever anxious to resuscitate in her the Arlette of old, ardent and lively, tasting of life as of a fine savory fruit.

At that moment she was no longer but a poor little creature, all played out by the trial that had fallen on her, upheld only by the unconscious expectation of something. She knew not what, but that something might indeed be Guy's return.

Ah! if he had been there, she would no longer have felt that terrible sensation of being all alone in the world from which even the affection of her old friends could not deliver her. She would also have accepted, without suffering so much, seeing all things born again under the first renewing sunshine.

For spring had come. The buds were opening

on the branches bloated with sap. Early apple trees were covered with a rosy snow. A new life was palpitating in the earth, which had become fruitful again, in the warm air, loaded with undefinable odors, through which fluttered the first white butterflies. And Arlette, herself, was undergoing the power of that mysterious joy shed on beings and on things, while she was wandering in the garden, listening to the clear ringing of the Holy Saturday bells, already announcing the great feast of the Resurrection, which came late that year. Around her floated the perfume of the violets with which the garden was dotted, for they had blossomed there in thousands, and,

being pressed, shed a balm.

Her father had loved violets as she did. And, shivering all of a sudden, she took to making a harvest of them so as to go and carry them to him, there where he had been sleeping for long weeks already. She was gathering them with a sort of passion; then, wearied, she came back to sit down and slipped her little fingers into that pile of sun-warmed petals, thinking of other Easter festivals, so joyful that the mere memory of them made her shudder with anguish for the happinesses that were irreparably lost. There was no noise around her except the sonorous chant of the bells or, momentarily, a sound of voices rising from some neighboring garden. Mademoiselle Catherine was in the little shop, and the captain was receiving some visit or other in the low hall. But no doubt the visitor had left, for she heard Monsieur Malouzec asking the Breton servant girl:

"Where, then, is Mademoiselle Arlette?"

The information was given in a less elevated tone, and only the captain's answer came to her:

"She is in the garden? Well, then, let us go

and find her. You are coming?"

To whom, then, was he speaking? She raised her head with a dull beating of the heart, her hands joined on her harvest of violets. A wave of blood had ascended to her little face, suddenly restoring to her all her delightful brilliance. The captain was entering upon the walk and behind, ah! he, it was indeed he! Guy was advancing toward her, preceding her old friend! She stood erect, and the violets trickled around her in a perfumed rain.

"Guy! at last, it is you! Ah! how you have

delayed in coming!"

In a voice that trembled, he asked:

"Did you desire my return, and does it give you a little pleasure to see me?"

"A little! Oh! Guy, how long it is since I

have been expecting you!"

"And it is many days also, Arlette, since I have been awaiting this moment!"

"When did you arrive?"
"About an hour ago."

"And it was you who were with the captain?"

"Yes, I had a request to make of him."

And Guy turned half way around toward the old man, who was listening, with an undefinable expression on his good-natured and amiable countenance.

"A request which you will answer as it suits you, little queen; for, as for me . . . Mon-

sieur de Pazanne, since Arlette is there to keep

you company, I will go and see Catherine."

He went away, and Guy sat down beside the child, without taking his gaze from the refined and paled young countenance, seeking the eyes whose limpid flame he adored.

"Oh! Guy!" she remarked, almost in a whisper, "why can you not remain always? It is

good when you are here!"

"No, I cannot remain always . . . and yet, since we have been separated, I have discovered one thing! It is that I could no longer do without your presence, my precious little friend. I have come to claim you."

"To claim me!"

Her exclamation resembled a cry of deliverance.

"Dear Arlette, would it be too hard for you to leave your Douarnenez and come and live in Paris?"

"I no longer love Douarnenez now," she remarked with trembling lips. "I no longer love it but in the past, because he lived there. Is it a demand you wish to make of me? Oh! take me away! Do not leave me any longer! Wherever you will bring me, I will go, Guy!"

He felt that she spoke truly, that wherever he would have asked her to go, she would follow him, confidingly, because she had faith in him

and in soul was already all his own.

An ardent joy raised him up, in such a way that he had never before felt the like. Then, imprisoning one of her dear little hands in both of his, he asked with infinite tenderness: "And you do not even ask me, Arlette, whither I wish to take you?"

"Close to my aunt!"

"Yes, at first, for a few weeks, for as long as you will decide yourself, until the day when you will have at last given me the right . . ."

He stopped for a moment, then his voice arose all at once grave and suppliant, he drawing

toward him Arlette's very soul:

"Until the day when you will have at last given me the right to bring you to my house, when you have become my wife."

She became white to her very lips, and a sin-

gle word escaped from her:

"Guy!"

"You will not repel your great friend, will you, Arlette? You will give him the certainty of never more losing you?"

Feebly she said, trembling in the presence of

that unheard-of happiness which came to her:

"I am not dreaming, Guy? It is indeed to me that you are speaking? It is indeed true that you wish to take me, so that I may never again leave you?"

He repeated:

"Never again, if you have enough affection for me to consent to it."

"Now, Guy, there is no one on earth that I

love like you! But . . ."

And she stopped, disturbed by a sudden fear

in her divine eagerness:

"But are you quite sure that it is not merely from charity that you wish well of me, because I have asked you never again to leave me?"

"From charity?"

A smile came over him that transfigured his countenance; then, in a lower tone, drawing for the first time under his lips the adored little face, he concluded, the child nestling in his arms, as he had dreamed her:

"No, it is not from charity; it is because I also love you more than anything in the world,

my Arlette."

And in the smiling peace of that peaceful Breton garden richly flowered with Easter violets, to the tinkling of the bells that were chanting the "Alleluia" of the Resurrection, thus took place the betrothal of little Arlette to her Cousin Guy.

THE END.

